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WOOED AND MARRIED.

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A NOVEL.

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BY

ROSA NOUCHETTE CAREY,

AUTHOR OF "NELLIE'S MEMORIES," "WEE WIFIE," "BARBARA HEATHCOTE'S TRIAL," "AND "ROBERT ORD'S ATONEMENT,"

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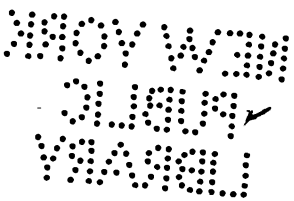

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WOOED AND MARRIED.

CHAPTER I.

CONCERNING COBWEBS.

ONCE upon a time there was a little old woman who essayed to sweep the sky free from cobwebs.

One dandles the children on one's knee with a laugh at the sing-song rhyme of the oft-repeated story, "Old woman, old woman, whither so high?"

After all, there is an odd sort of pathos, a parabolic excellence in these nursery stories. The cobwebs are nearer earth, to be sure; young brains get entangled in them; the old brooms will not sweep clean; the fine filmy threads intersect everything—to some eyes even the sky itself is not clear.

If Dymphna Elliott could have had her way there would be nothing unpleasant in life—sunshine without clouds, roses without thorns, cobwebs nowhere. This is how she would arrange matters: plenty of loving-kindness, no stint of sympathy, a new system of largesse and almsgiving.

Impracticable, absurd!

Tangled among the cobwebs, indeed!

Of all visionaries, youth is the most fallacious; its very genius is abrupt, destructive, erratic. It moves in a cycle of its own devising—fixed orbits are its detestation; broken-up by-ways, forbidden thoroughfares, audacious short-cuts are better than the old paths. If it had its way, it would rather flash as a meteor through space than be dragged at the chariot-wheels of steady old Time.

Here are cobwebs enough!

Here is a young brain crying scorn on an old worn-out world, just tottering on to its six thousand years of sin and

pain and weariness; youthful impatience and petulance striving to stamp out ancient landmarks, to obliterate old proverbs, to bring in the sunshine of a new creation.

Futile labor of a Sisyphus!

Ludicrous, but sad.

A thing out of its proper niche is always a pitiful sight. Young birds in strange nests, a drone in a hive of busy workers, a young face on the outskirts of a crowd, seeking kindness and protection in a world of staring sight-seers, impotent childish pride opposed to cold shrugs and dignified repression —these are as sad as the rich gleaning of beautiful thoughts and warm affections scattered over an empty harvest-field.

Misunderstood!

What a whole world of pain and slow torture there is in that one word! One pronounces its syllables slowly and with reluctance. Dym once declared, in one of her reckless moments, that the word would be found engraven on her heart, as Calais was on the heart of an embittered queen.

Calais and Mary—misunderstood and Dymphna Elliott. Somebody else says, with a wise shake of the head, nothing but Temper—written in italics and with a big capital.

Some people cannot see their own cobwebs.

After all, one may have different opinions.

The little tribunal at present sitting on the Dymphna case are arriving at an adverse verdict; the jury are agreed, every man of them, and the poor old judge is beginning to settle his black cap with trembling hands.

It goes hard with some natures to arrive at any decision.

Mrs. Tressilian was one of these.

With her, procrastination was a reprieve. She loved to defer action, to live for ever in a region of possibilities and uncertainty. For one thing, she was never certain of anything but her own symptoms.

A foe to impulse, large and lymphatic of disposition, one read "hypochondriac" written legibly on her fair apathetic features, which were just now disturbed from their ordinary placidity.

She was deep in an argument with her daughter. And, as usual, having the worst of it.

Beatrix Tressilian was plaintiff, jury, and counsel in her own person.

"Temper, my dear mother—temper, every bit of it."

"So you have said before, Beatrix. You know it makes me nervous to hear a thing repeated over and over again, as you have been doing for the last half-hour; and Dr. Richter only just gone, and my composing-draught not taken;" and Mrs. Tressilian, in real agitation, had recourse to her vinaigrette.

"My dear mother, we shall never arrive at any decision if you do not keep calm," replied her daughter, coldly.

The scene was a sunshiny drawing-room somewhere in the region of Belgravia. A room unique as a triumph of upholstery, and tropical in temperature; a perfect miracle of satin, ormolu, and bric-à-brac; faint perfumes of rare Indian woods blending oddly with the cool fresh scent of roses and heliotrope; the centre figure of the whole, the tall girl in the riding-habit, who stands toying somewhat impatiently with her whip.

Take them all in all—irregularities, defects, and such small errata of Nature—in looking at Beatrix Tressilian you are looking at a lovely woman; but you must rest satisfied with this knowledge—there is little beyond.

Beatrix Tressilian is the centre figure of many a picture; a young goddess, whom few men would dare to elect as their household divinity.

A splendid young figure, too; yellow-haired as a Venus, and glowing with health and vigor; gray-eyed, and as erect as an Amazon, with small white hands that can grip with a man's strength, with a mouth that can set itself closely in an immovable curve even when the lips smile. Such is Beatrix Tressilian.

In fairy tales the evil genius of the story is always some witch or hag or hideous old fairy, wizened of face and malevolent in temper. In the nursery, sin and ugliness always go together; it is only the grown-up children that can read that verse aright about "the angel of light." Dym was ever ready to aver that Beatrix Tressilian was the evil genius of her story. There were times, doubtless, when she thought the fiery oven or the red-hot shoes would be insufficient punishment. Her witch was yellow-haired and gray-eyed, but she was the cross old fairy godmother for all that.

"And you really think, my dear," began Mrs. Tressilian

hesitatingly, in a slow full voice which had grown slower and riper with age—a voice which always seemed to flow on with sleepy modulation—"you really think, my dear, that we ought to reprimand Miss Elliott severely for such conduct?"

What a contrast between mother and daughter! Perfection of health and hypochondria—youthful severity opposed to the pitying leniency of age.

"Think? I am sure of it," returned Beatrix, quickly. "I think it is our duty for Edith's sake to take decided steps at once—at once," with a meaning pause on the repetition.

"Very well," replied her mother, fretfully; "but it is very unfortunate, just as Dr. Richter says I am to avoid unnecessary agitation; and I am sure it will agitate me dreadfully to send that poor girl away."

"Yes, it is unfortunate," assented Beatrix, coldly; "but you ought to have taken my advice, mother, in the first instance. I told you Miss Elliott would never do for Edith; she is too much a spoilt child herself."

"I am sure I do not know why I should always be guided by you, Beatrix," returned Mrs. Tressilian, with an attempt at dignity, but failing lamentably, and relapsing into her fretful state. "I think it very hard that you can never get on with Edith's governesses; this is the seventh we have tried, and each one worse than the last. I am sure it must be your fault somehow; for she seems a harmless little thing enough, and very prettily spoken, too. I shall never forget how nicely she attended to me in my last nervous attack."

A scornful smile passed over Miss Tressilian's fine features.

"Always the same thing, mother. Because she acquitted herself handily in your sick-room she must prove an excellent governess for Edith, and all her sullenness and bad humors are to be forgiven."

"But she is never sullen with me, Beatrix—at least when you are not in the room; though I cannot deny she is a little abrupt and off-hand in her manner sometimes. But we must remember how young she is, Trichy."

"That is what I mean, mother; she is so absurdly young—not eighteen, I believe. Look at her and Edith together: why, they go on just like a couple of children, romping and laughing; but the moment I go into the room there is that

odious black look, and the least remonstrance is met by impertinence or a shower of tears."

"I do think you are a little hard on her, Trichy."

Beatrix shrugged her shoulders; she was growing weary of the discussion. She always got her way in the end, but delay provoked her. She had made up her mind that her sister's governess was obnoxious to her, and not to be tolerated for a moment. Her mother's hints of mercy to the culprit had no effect on her; the soft wave of "the charity that endureth" broke unavailingly against her determination. Six governesses had already been dismissed from Lansdowne House; the fiat had already gone forth against the seventh—Miss Elliott must go. Miss Tressilian's will had always been the law in that house; "recommended to mercy" had never been her motto.

"Well, perhaps you are right, Beatrix," continued her mother, after another vacillating pause; and she drew the bone of contention—a blotted copy-book—towards her with a furtive sigh. "After all, it was very wrong and silly of her to scribble all this nonsense in Edith's book; it shows an ill-regulated and undisciplined mind at the best."

There they were, the few foolish sentences which had brought down the vials of wrath on Miss Elliott's devoted head.

Cobwebs, and dusty ones too.

A little scornful tirade drawn out of a girl's sad heart, and scrawled idly in a rounded school-girl's hand in an old copy-book, blotted and half erased with tears:

"In the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and forty—I, Dymphna Mabel Elliott, being of sound mind, and in possession of all my faculties, do hereby set forth and solemnly declare that life is nothing but a deceit and snare, made up of appearances without reality, beginnings with no end, efforts without success, disappointment and weariness always. And so endeth the first chapter of Dym's life."

And over leaf, just jotted down as a sort of bitter jest, verging on the pathetic, a fragment in the same girlish hand:

"DYM'S DIARY: A RECORD OF ONE WEEK.

"*A new sort of barometer, invented expressly for Will. Not an aneroid.*

"*Sunday.*—'In cœlo quies,' and nowhere else. Wind in

the east; strong enough to blow out the altar lights; very chilly atmosphere.

"*Monday.*—An April day: plenty of sunshine and showers; sunshine predominating, rainbow tints appearing at intervals; towards evening one little star on the edge of a blue cloud, signifying hope; no fogs or Will-o'-the-wisps.

"*Tuesday.*—A dead calm: all things at a low level; lights without shades; atmosphere sultry; temperature changing towards evening.

"*Wednesday.*—A fit of vapors early; in the afternoon a new edition of the play *Much Ado about Nothing;* a storm in a teacup; calm again towards evening.

"*Thursday.*—General fogginess; darkness within and without. 'Alas, poor Yorick!' alias Dym.

"*Friday.*—Gusty, and decidedly tempestuous; rapid oscillations of the mercury; atmospheric pressure; clouds drifting wildly; one little bark far out at sea, struggling among the breakers.

"*Saturday.*—Still in the deep waters; no lights ahead; no port in view; adverse winds blowing; all hands on deck."

And here was a great blot of tears.

Poor little cynic; and brought before such a tribunal, too! Here was a ruthless hand ready to sweep down cobwebs.

"Did you ever read such rubbish in your life, mother? There is plenty more farther on," continued the young censor. severely; but it is not worth wasting your time over it."

"I don't half understand it," returned Mrs. Tressilian, helplessly.

"Of course you don't," interrupted Beatrix, in her magnificent voice of scorn. "Who could understand such crazed fancies? It is nearly time for your afternoon nap," went on the wary young diplomatist. "Suppose I send Miss Elliott to you, as I pass the school-room. Edith is only practicing."

"You won't leave me? You do not wish me to speak to her alone?" asked her mother in an alarmed voice.

Like other good-natured people, Mrs. Tressilian had a wholesome horror of scenes; she had conceived some kindly feeling towards the young girl whom chance had placed under her roof; and then, as she remembered Edith was so fond of her, what a pity, she thought, Beatrix had taken this fancy into her

head! The two did get on very badly together; but she was not sure that Beatrix was not the most to blame; but for the sake of peace she must go. Beatrix could be stubborn, inexorable even, as her mother knew. Meanwhile the poor little culprit herself, as yet ignorant of the storm that awaited her, sat in the hot, close school-room, turning over the leaves of Edith's music-book, and trying hard not to give her instructions in a sharp, querulous voice.

"Dear Miss Elliott, it is so hot," pleaded the child, "and I am so tired; do let me leave off. I am sure it is a good long hour since I began."

"Nonsense, Edie; how often I have told you not to be idle! You are very inattentive this afternoon. Hold your wrist lower, and go on with the scale in C minor." And as the child's rosy face lengthened perceptibly over the petulant reproof, she continued in a milder voice: "You are so tiresome, Edie, and the weather is so hot"—an admission made in such a weary young voice that Edith stopped altogether in her playing to throw her arms round her governess's neck, with a penitent kiss or two.

"Couldn't we go in the park this evening? You look so pale; and I am sure a walk would do you good," went on the child, coaxingly. But both child and governess started asunder, as though detected in some wrong, as the door was flung back and Miss Tressilian stood on the threshold.

"Faugh, what an atmosphere! How often I have asked you, Miss Elliott, to open the window at the top as well as at the bottom; no wonder Edie looks so flushed. Never mind your scales for a moment, Edie; you were only talking when I came in. Mamma wants to speak to Miss Elliott."

Miss Elliott rose immediately, without a word. She was a slight pale girl, somewhat low in stature, and looking younger than her age, which, in truth, was barely eighteen, and with a sweet foreign-looking face, its clear olive complexion redeemed entirely from plainness by the bright clever-looking dark eyes.

Miss Elliott might have known what awaited her in the drawing-room by the sudden color that flushed into her pale face as she hastily obeyed Miss Tressilian's summons; but it died away into ominous whiteness as, with much prompting from her daughter, Mrs. Tressilian slowly and laboriously delivered herself of her summing up.

"I hope you are following me, Miss Elliott. You quite understand the various faults I am trying to point out to you?"

"I understand you perfectly," returned the girl, in an odd quavering voice; but the effort to speak made her cheeks burn again. "You wish—that is, you think that I am not fit to teach Edith any more?"

"Yes, that is my mother's meaning," interposed Beatrix, hastily.

"I never said she was not fit, Trichy," began Mrs. Tressilian, reproachfully. "You are so harsh in your expressions. I only said, Miss Elliott, that considering all things, your youth, inexperience, and what my daughter considers your personal antagonism to her, that it would be better that, on all accounts, we should part."

"And you will really send me away?" cried the poor child—for she was little more than a child—in a frightened voice.

"I do not see I have any alternative," replied Mrs. Tressilian; and then, becoming helpless again in her pity: "You see, you are so young; hardly old enough for such a responsible position. My child's interests would suffer," she went on with a little dignity; but Miss Elliott interrupted her.

"Yes, I know; that is just what they all say of me. I am too childish, too silly, too ill-tempered; but I did try so to do my best. And now Will will never believe that I did. And I am sure," in a broken voice—"I am sure Edie is fond of me."

A harder heart than Mrs. Tressilian's would have been moved to pity at the involuntary pathos of those simple words. The girl's flushed face, and voice choked with barely-repressed sobs, were eloquent pleading enough. A painful hesitation appeared on the lady's good-natured face, and, if truth were to be told, her motherly soul yearned to comfort the young culprit before her; but Beatrix, who had hitherto held aloof, struck in here with her calm, sarcastic voice.

"I don't see that Edith's fondness has anything to do with it, mother; a child always attaches itself to a playfellow; and with all consideration to Miss Elliott's good intentions, I think she was little more to Edith."

At the first sound of Miss Tressilian's voice, the young governess's manner wholly changed. She drew herself up,

and pressed her hands to her eyes hastily, as though to force back the tears, while a proud sullen look came over her face.

"It was wrong, to say the least of it," continued Beatrix, in the same cold voice, "to write all that rubbish in Edith's book; wrong and childish in the extreme."

Here an indignant exclamation on Miss Elliott's part stopped her.

"I might have known this was your doing, Miss Tressilian. What have I done to you that you should become my enemy?"

"My dear, Beatrix meant no unkindness to you," exclaimed Mrs. Tressilian, alarmed at the angry gesture with which Miss Elliott possessed herself of the offending copy-book; "it was very wrong and foolish to write those silly things. You know you are a little incautious in some things, my dear Miss Elliott."

"But no one had the right to read them," cried the girl, passionately; "no one—no one! It was mean, dishonorable. I did not think it of you, Miss Tressilian. Such a little thing as that, too, and to be turned against me!"

"Miss Elliott, I cannot allow you to speak to my daughter in that manner."

"Why should I not speak to her? Has she ever given me a kind word or look? Has she ever remembered she is only a girl like myself? Ah, I may well call her my enemy; no one but an enemy could have done me this wrong!"

Beatrix shrugged her shoulders slightly.

"I think Miss Elliott is giving you a tolerable proof of her temper, mamma."

"But who arouses that temper, Miss Tressilian? Cruel, cruel; and to think you are not much older than I. Let me go, Mrs. Tressilian. I would not stop here even if I were starving and had not a crust in the world."

"An amiable spirit in which to take reproof," muttered Beatrix, still more scornfully.

"I only said I was sorry because of Edith, and because" —faltering in spite of herself—"because it is so hard to go back and be a burden on Will. If it had not been for your daughter," she continued, clasping her hands in mere anguish of recollection, "I think I should have begged and prayed you, dear Mrs. Tressilian, to let me stop on a little longer and

try to do better. I have not been once cross this week, and Edith was getting so fond of me; and now he will look so sad when I tell him that I have come back to him again."

"My dear, I never meant that you should not stay out your month; and perhaps, if Beatrix does not mind, we might arrange something——" began Mrs. Tressilian, soothingly.

"Not for the world!" cried the young girl, rising. "I know you mean kindly—you always do; but I have made up my mind now that I will not remain a day longer in this house than I can help. It is not your fault that I have been so unhappy here, and I never thought that we should part like this. But it is better so—much better so;" and fearful of breaking down again in the presence of her enemy, the young governess hastened from the room.

"What do you think of your protégée now, mother?" exclaimed Beatrix, triumphantly, when they were left alone.

"I am sure I don't know, Beatrix," returned her mother peevishly, and half crying; "only you have both made me ill between you;" and seeing that her mother was really too agitated to pursue the question, Beatrix very adroitly turned the subject.

Meanwhile Miss Elliott, after retreating with some dignity from the room, was indulging herself in a very hearty and unromantic fit of crying in her own little garret up-stairs—a room which had always gone by the name of the governess's room, and which had been pronounced by Miss Tressilian to be good enough for the purpose.

In fairy-stories the poor little heroine is always the occupant of a garret, unless she sleeps among the cinders, as that world-renowned kitchen-wench Cinderella did. The intermediate floors—the state rooms, with their hangings and canopies—are always devoted to the harsh stepmother or the cruel sisters. In this sort of literature startling contrasts are the chief glory of the tale—plenty of ashes to begin with; cloth of gold, hundreds and thousands of spangles, a wonderful glitter and sheen to embellish the end.

This poor little Cinderella dwelt like a fairy princess in her garret; its sloping whitewashed walls were as dear to her as Beatrix's pink and white draperies were to her in the room down-stairs. What wonderful dreams she had here! From the window she could see the park, a strip of green lying

somewhere on the confines of the sunset; behind the grand houses opposite she could catch glimpses of a wonderful panorama, fleeting views of great red and golden clouds, waves and billows of light. The old boxes piled up under the window made a throne fit for a queen. Here Dym would sit in the twilight for hours, while Edith, in her silk or gauze frock, was dancing about the still empty drawing-rooms. Sometimes she could hear the laughter and the rustle of dresses as the ladies came up the stairs. She would hide sometimes in a dark corner on the landing below and watch them, as one watches a flock of strange birds. What wonderful plumage, she thought; what white throats and queenly heads! She would shrink back ashamed as the tallest and queenliest of them all passed her. "How well she looks! People with yellow hair ought always to wear sea-green," she thought, as she slipped away again to her throne among the boxes.

Sometimes she would come back to her place with hot cheeks and wet eyes, and when the music began stop her ears and cry softly. "It is not right. Why should one be so different?" she thought. "I suppose if the want were not here I should not feel it so. I wonder if all governesses are so lonely and sad as I. Will will say it is my fault, and that I ought to make myself happy. He would not like me to be sitting up here looking at the stars, and feeling so out of tune with it all. O Will, Will, if I could only have a good talk with you now!" And Dym's tears would flow again.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself, sitting all in the dark, and with the window wide open too?" cries Caroline, running in with a stream of light and good-natured bustle. "Why, you aren't more than a child yourself, Miss Elliott. And such a nice little supper as I have served for you in the school-room! A little bit of chicken hot, and a meringue as I have stole from James himself as he was carrying the tray down."

"Thank you, Caroline; you are very good," says the poor little governess very humbly, and drying her eyes.

Somehow the school-room, with its shady lamp and great arm-chair, and the cozy supper, seem to lift a little of the burden off her; she does not scorn the meringue, which Caroline pronounces so as to rhyme with syringe. Many a time have Caroline's good-tempered face and rough-and-ready kindnesses banished the dark cloud. "Thank you, Caroline; you are

very good, and it does look comfortable," she would say again; and she would eat her supper gratefully, and forget the grand dresses down-stairs, and that she was only a poor little Cinderella of a governess.

Dym did not always have such sad thoughts. Sometimes her garret might have been an enchanted palace, she peopled it so grandly. What castles she built there! what marvelous snatches of poetry and prose she compiled! The girl's mind was in that state of transition when it was obliged to find an outlet for itself.

Young people run this sort of gauntlet once in their lives; they arm themselves with all sorts of fancied powers, and ride full tilt against circumstance. This phase is to some existences what childish ailments are to the physical constitution; they go through it as a child goes through whooping-cough or scarlatina. No one is to blame for it—they themselves least of all. It is a healthy outlet, nothing more. These embryo poets, novelists, and artists indeed turn for the most part into very practical matter-of-fact people; only a few refuse to lay down their childish arms. By and by we shall see them harnessed in statelier panoply, and rushing down into the arena to do battle to the death. Bring laurel and bay to encircle the brows of the conquerors, and peace and a decent grave to the vanquished!

Dym's crude efforts were chiefly rhymic—small adaptations of thought and measure in the Barrett Browning style, very flimsy of structure, full of startling paradoxes, and hardly recognizable by the great ideal. Dym gave it up after a time, and settled down to the sober prose of her own life. It did no great harm—it served to pass away a good many lonely hours; but I think she was a sadder and better woman when she could utter Mrs. Barrett Browning's "valediction" with her heart, instead of seeking to reproduce a feeble imitation with her brain.

Nevertheless, with some exceptions, the hours in her garret were Dym's happiest ones.

Poor Dym! it was a sad enough face that she brought there after her interview with Mrs. Tressilian. Wounded pride, anger, and fear throbbed in the girl's sore heart as she sat on the edge of her little bed when her first burst of anguish was over, with the tears rolling down her cheeks one by one.

Into what bitter earnest her poor little jest had turned! She was struggling among the breakers, indeed.

"I did try to do my best, Will, I did indeed," she kept saying, speaking out loud in her agitation; "but who can keep one's temper with her? I wonder if you will believe it —if you ever do believe it of me," she continued, with a gesture of despair, walking hurriedly to and fro, as though some thought had made her restless. "I know I behaved very badly at that school, and that I might have got on better with Miss Northcote; but I did mean to do my best here." And then, with a fresh burst of grief, "But to think of my going back to be a burden to him again, dear old fellow! I have always been more a care than a comfort to him; and he so ill and overworked too. Ah, if mamma were only alive, and I could put down my head on her lap and tell her how good I meant to be, and how I have failed! Will will never believe me." And so on, till the poor child's head ached with the intensity of her misery.

By and by a new thought seemed to strike her; and with a desperate sort of movement, as though she feared courage would fail her, she sat herself down to write to this same unknown Will. The tears came again and again as she did so; but she dashed them away impatiently, and only went on the faster.

"My own dearest old Will Conqueror,—I only hope you will make this out; but I have been crying so that I can hardly see plain. How can I help it when I am so miserable?" —"miserable" rendered illegible by a great tear-blot.—"O Will, what will you say? I am dismissed again from my situation. Mrs. Tressilian told me I must go this afternoon, and I have been crying ever since. I am so afraid that you will not believe that I meant to do my very best this time. How can I help being young and silly, and all the horrid things they call me, when I shall not be eighteen for another month? People expect too much of me; and it was unkind of Miss Tressilian saying they did not want a playfellow for Edith— and so unfair, too, when Mrs. Tressilian said when she engaged me that my age did not matter at all, as Edith was still delicate and must not study much, and she wanted a cheerful young person who could amuse her.

"And, Will dear, I have tried so hard to do my duty. I

have not been nearly so cross as I was at Miss Northcote's, and I have broken myself of all the silly habits that used to annoy Mrs. Saunders so. I daresay I did behave very badly then, and I am afraid Miss Northcote was right when she told you I encouraged her girls to break the rules; but you know I never could bear school, and I am sure I am quite staid and prim now. And, Will, I really have tried to get the better of my temper. I am sure I cannot have been so cross, or Edith would not be so fond of me. She has been like a little sister to me for kindness and goodness. If it had not been for Miss Tressilian's sneering speeches I should have been quite amiable; but you cannot think how she goads and irritates me—she is as bad to me as a red rag is to a bull.

"But what is the good of my saying all this? I know you will just shake your head and say, 'You know it is your own fault, Dym;' and it is this that makes me so mad. I cannot bear coming back to you again like a bad penny. I always have been a burden to you, dear old Will, and it hurts me so to think it. I know I shall cry night and day till I see you. And, Will, do try and believe the best of me. I might have done better, of course, and I need not have made myself so disagreeable to Miss Tressilian; but if you only knew how provoking she is! Do write a word to me, there's a dear old fellow, and tell me you know I tried my best.—Your loving and sorrowful little sister,

"DYM."

And when she had finished her letter, she just read it over, sighing as though her heart would break; and then, with a muttered, "What is the good of giving him a month's pain in advance?" she tore it up into little pieces and scattered them on the roof, where a few deluded sparrows mistook the white fragments for crumbs.

That was the way in which Dymphna Elliott faced her heaviest troubles.

The cobwebs were not swept away yet.

CHAPTER II.

KIDDLE-A-WINK INTRODUCES HIMSELF.

SOMEWHAT later in the evening Dym crept down to the school-room very red-eyed and subdued, and very much ashamed of herself for keeping the school-room tea waiting. Edith would be tired and very cross with her long fast, she thought with a good deal of compunction. Edith was not there, however.

The school-room was a long narrow slip of a room—evidently an after-thought of the architect—but pleasant, and well lighted by two windows; the door stood open, and the evening sun streamed on the small round tea-table, which Caroline had set out with more than her usual liberality and love of good things; but before Dym had more than time to wonder at the unusual display of preserves and cakes, a very small gray dog—the very smallest and wiriest of Skye terriers that she had ever seen—ran at her with a short howl of surprise, and then suddenly sat up on his hind legs and begged. This was startling, to say the least of it, but it was far more so to find that the dog was not the sole occupant of the room. A very tall man, in a dark-tweed shooting-coat, was leaning against the mantelpiece, in that embarrassing position which only brought a pair of very broad shoulders and the back of a curly head into prominent notice; for the owner of these shoulders was looking intently at the green and gold shavings with which the grate was encumbered.

Miss Elliott might be forgiven for the surprise that kept her immovable in the doorway, while the little Skye terrier sat up and waved its paws at her in dumb friendliness; for no form of mankind, no brothers or cousins, were ever known to cross the threshold of the school-room.

The young cornet of dragoons, Charles Tressilian, only honored his sister and her governess with a good-humored nod when he met them on the stairs or about the park. He vouchsafed a curious glance once, when he first came upon

Dym in her little close bonnet. I suppose the olive complexion and dark eyes of the little governess did not meet with his approval, for he never volunteered a second look. Not that Dym cared about it, though; there were plenty of these gay young officers about the house, in attendance on Miss Tressilian. Dym could hear the clanking of their spurs sometimes on the polished staircase when they came in from a dress parade, when she was hearing Edith her German verbs. "Miss Elliott," Edith would say archly, "when I grow up I shall marry Colonel Delaire; he is much the nicest of them; he has great yellow moustaches, and a beard that hurts when he kisses me. I don't think he ought to kiss Beatrix so often, Miss Elliott, do you? She is quite grown up, you know, and the others don't do it."

"Hush! go on with your verb, Edith," says the governess, with a sigh; she thinks it must be rather nice to be Beatrix, and to have a colonel of her own. She catches glimpses of her sometimes, as she passes the drawing-room door, sitting at the piano in her white evening-dress, quite surrounded by these young fellows. She knew the colonel Edith had spoken about; he was a pleasant, gentlemanly man, and had spoken very kindly to them one day when a great dog had frightened them in Kensington Gardens.

"Who is that little dark-eyed girl whom I meet so often in the park with Edith?" asked the colonel, when he saw her passing by the open door.

"Oh, Miss Elliott, her governess," answered Beatrix indifferently; "it is a pity mamma has engaged such a dowdy little thing. You have turned over too quickly, Frank; I have two bars to play."

Old Dr. Schreiber, the German master, is the only masculine figure that ever crosses the school-room threshold; he wears a curious old wig and plaid waistcoat, and indulges plentifully in snuff. Dym hates him and his old-fashioned politeness and broken-English compliments.

"Ah, you are a child of the South, Meess Elliott," he would say. "You have the Italian blood in your veins" (Dym's grandmother was an Italian); "you are not cold and proud, like these islanders—they are ver great, but *ach Himmel*——" and the rest of the old man's rhapsody would be lost in a pinch of snuff.

Dym knew in an instant that the broad shoulders and the tweed shooting-coat did not belong either to Charlie Tressilian or to any of his brother officers—the brown curly hair looked sun-dried, and wholly unlike the trim closely-cut heads she remembered. Her little thrill of astonishment was followed by a long pause of indecision—how was she to address herself to this stranger? The back of a man's head does not conduce to conversation; it was difficult to go forward, and awkward to retreat. She did neither, but just coughed slightly.

"Ah, are you there, my little friend?" came in brisk amiable tones from the fireplace. "Have you told them I am dying for a cup of tea?"

Dym grew hot, and then felt inclined to laugh. At any risks, she must make him turn round.

"They have gone out to dinner; are you expecting Miss Tressilian, sir?"

At the first sound of the demure voice the arms dropped from the mantelpiece, and a brown-bearded face looked round in evident astonishment.

"Who in the name of wonder—I beg your pardon, but I thought my little cousin was here; I am afraid I was very rude just now; I did not hear you enter. Kiddle-a-wink, you rogue, just leave the lady alone."

Certainly the oddest person. A cousin—Dym had never heard of him. Stop; had not Edith talked often of a Cousin Guy? Perhaps this was he. What a tall man he was! big, too, and dressed in an odd foreign sort of fashion, with a blue handkerchief knotted loosely round his throat, the ends flying, and the very brownest face she had ever seen in her life, with dark quizzical eyes.

"I knew they were all out," he continued good-humoredly, as though to relieve her evident embarrassment; "the butler told me they had a dinner engagement. I know they are awfully gay people. Never mind me; I am used to disappointments, and they did not expect me. I only told Charlie I might look in one of these days."

"But you have not dined, Mr. ——" stammered Dym, more than ever convinced that this must be the "Cousin Guy," and longing with all her heart that Edith would come back.

"Guy Chichester, at your service," returned that gentle-

man, promptly answering the involuntary stammer. "I suppose I ought to have introduced myself before, as Edith is not here to do it for me. I believe I have the pleasure of speaking to——"

"I am only Miss Elliott, the governess," interrupted Dym, shyly, feeling painfully conscious of her red eyes and pale cheeks, and wishing she had changed her shabby gown, a faded lilac gingham, for her usual afternoon black silk. She was not sure the quizzical eyes had not already noticed these and sundry other defects. "Shall I go and tell Orton to serve you up some dinner at once?"

"On no account; I have already declined Orton's kind attentions. Edith has promised me a cup of tea. I suppose she will be back directly she has attended to the kitten's comfort. I found some young demons in the shape of boys stoning a little kitten, so I just dropped it in my pocket, much to Kiddle-a-wink's disgust, and brought it on to Edith to cosset and cuddle to her heart's content. I hope," with another kind inquisitive glance, "that Edith's governess will not resent my uninvited presence in her own sacred precincts."

"I am afraid Mrs. Tressilian will not like it," answered Dym, honestly—she always spoke the truth, whatever it cost her; but her eyes said, "Edith and I will like it very much indeed."

"Oh, I will take the consequences of that," coolly sitting down, and drawing the dog's black muzzle into his hand. "Cousin Guy always does as he likes here." Then, with a droll look in his eyes, "Doesn't Edith change her governesses very often? When I last had tea here, a funny little lady of fifty-five—Miss Dale I think they called her—poured it out for me, and the time before that I found a very stout widow lady in charge."

It was impossible not to laugh at Mr. Chichester's mischievous tone, and Dym did so very heartily, and then tried to look demure.

"You have not been a governess long," was the next statement volunteered by this singular person.

"How can you tell that?" asked Dym, somewhat timidly.

"Why, you are not very old, to begin with; and, next, you have not learnt to look prim and demure without a perceptible effort. Wait till you are Miss Dale's age. Ah, here comes Edith, and with the kitten hugged up in her apron, I declare.

Why, my fair Saxon, do you mean to lead me a cat-and-dog life after all? Look at Kiddle-a-wink's ears."

"Oh, Cousin Guy," exclaimed the child, running up to him with her eyes full of tears, "one of those dreadful stones had hurt it after all; one of its paws was bleeding; and when we put the poor thing down, it just held it up, mewing dreadfully. Caroline says it is broken, and she has been trying to bind it all this time, only Kitty does cry so!"

"Who is Caroline? I don't think she is much of a surgeon. Do you call that a bandage?" asked Cousin Guy, in the good-humored, half-cynical tone that seemed natural to him. "Hand over the victim to me." And in spite of the poor animal's plaintive cries, so trying to the nerves of Edith and her young governess, the brown shapely hands busied themselves with the wounded limb as tenderly and adroitly as would a woman's.

"There, I call that more respectable. Don't you think I ought to be appointed dresser to Guy's Hospital, Miss Elliott? Now put your patient to bed, Miss Nurse." And poor pussy having been deposited in a large work-basket well lined with an old shawl, Mr. Chichester quietly suggested that he had not yet enjoyed his promised cup of tea; whereupon Dym moved to the table, feeling sorely puzzled as to what Miss Tressilian would think of these proceedings.

The whole affair, however, seemed no novelty to Cousin Guy; and as for Edith, she was in the seventh heaven of delight. Dym had now discovered for herself that Mr. Chichester was not an unfrequent visitor to the school-room, and this set her more at her ease. She was very quiet at first, and left the conversation chiefly to Edith; but Mr. Chichester appealed so frequently to her, and his drollery and *bonhomie* were so infectious, that Dym's mirth-loving nature could hardly hold out long; and she soon forgot her swollen eyes and shabby dress in listening to the pleasant sallies of their new companion.

Dym was in a perilous state between old pain and new pleasure; but she wisely put away her heart-ache, and determined to enjoy the present. What a wonderful break that evening was in the monotony of the school-room life! That any one should address her in tones of equality—nay, more, of interest—was novelty enough to our little Cinderella. The long narrow room seemed quite blocked up by the broad

shoulders and big muscular figure, but it looked all the more cheerful for it. It was pleasanter to see Mr. Chichester pulling at his tawny brown beard with his sunburnt vigorous hand than to watch old Herr Schreiber taking snuff. She sat on in a sort of dream, while Mr. Chichester cut long even slices of bread, or helped his little cousin to her favorite preserve, rattling on merrily all the time.

"Who was it who used always to be cutting bread-and-butter? Ah, Werther's Charlotte, I remember. I saw it parodied once. Have you ever read the "Sorrows of Werther," Miss Elliott?"

Yes, Dym had. She had read it three times, and was ashamed to confess she liked it very much indeed. People thought it sentimental; she called it pathetic. Mr. Chichester looked at her with a comical frown of perplexity and amusement.

"You must be very young. I went through that sort of thing a dozen years ago," he went on in a rallying tone. "I am not much over thirty now. Do we all think Werther delicious at eighteen, I wonder? What can be the pleasures of melancholy, Miss Elliott, that youth is so desirous of enjoying them? It always seems to me that one has so much of the real thing in life."

"You are right," answered Dym, in a choked voice. Her color rose a little. Was it a chance hit, or had Mr. Chichester perceived her red eyes? "I think one likes it better in books," she went on, making a brave effort to recover herself and to speak naturally, "just as one enjoys the twilight or sad music."

Mr. Chichester smiled.

"Do you really think people do always enjoy them—elder people, I mean? I should fancy half-lights are rather a nuisance in some moods, and the sweetest music a 'long-drawn-out pain,' as some one calls it. But that is the worst of you women"—with a sudden frown—"you contrive somehow to extract a sort of enjoyment out of sorrow itself. Catch a sensible man listening to melancholy tunes in the twilight when things have gone wrong with him!" and he gave a little scornful laugh, and his tone struck Dym as somewhat bitter.

"I am afraid you think us very silly," she replied, timidly.

"I think you are all somewhat addicted to playing with

edged tools," he went on, and his gravity was unmistakable. "I have heard from one of the old Fathers of the art of cultivating cheerfulness, but never of the cultivation of melancholy. Fogs should be dispersed at all hazards," he continued, but his eyes were twinkling again. "When women sit and spin trash in the moonlight, men go out and work."

"Too bad," was all Dym could find to say.

Mr. Chichester, who had successfully shaken off his sudden moodiness, looked at her a little curiously.

"Why," he asked, "have you never imagined yourself worse off than Nature and Providence intended you to be? Forgive me," he continued, in a lower voice, as Dym tried to find some answer; "I am afraid, after all, I am playing with edged tools myself. Edith, as we have finished our tea, what do you think of asking Miss Elliott if you and I shall have a walk in Kensington Gardens?"

Edith clapped her hands gleefully, and then stopped herself.

"May not Miss Elliott go too, Cousin Guy?"

"Of course Miss Elliott may go if she wishes it," returned Cousin Guy, stroking Edith's flossy hair as he spoke.

"Certainly not. Edith, how could you think of such a thing?" exclaimed the young governess, in a little flurry. "Mr. Chichester, please do not keep her out late; her chest is rather delicate, and it is so damp in those Gardens under the trees."

"Spoken as Miss Dale might have spoken it. I see there is hope of you yet, Miss Elliott. To hear is to obey. And we cannot tempt you to favor us with your company?"

"No, thank you, sir," replied Dym, very gravely. She read, with the unerring instinct of a lady, why Mr. Chichester's invitation to herself was not very pressing. "Mrs. Tressilian would not like it, and you are quite able to take care of Edith without me."

"True, *noblesse oblige*. What tiresome things *les convenances* are, are they not, Miss Elliott? Here you are dying for a breath of fresh air. Nature says, 'Come.' Decorum, that cross-grained old jade, says, 'Stop at home.' Inclination has the worst of it, as usual."

"I can get plenty of fresh air in the squares."

"And a fine opportunity for addressing an ode to melancholy at the same time. Don't get spinning in the moonlight,

Miss Elliott, while we are gone." Mr. Chichester's tone was so droll and sympathetic, that Dym could not take umbrage at it. "Edith, run and get ready, and don't stand staring at us so. Don't you know that only clever people can talk real nonsense?"

"I don't think Edith knows what real nonsense is," said Dym, rather sadly. "I try my best; but I am afraid one gets rather moped and cross up here."

"You ought to keep a bottle labeled 'Spirits,' on the mantelpiece, 'to be shaken as well as taken,' Miss Elliott. Have you ever tried a good game of battledore and shuttlecock when you were unusually cross?"

"No. What an odd idea!" replied Dym, laughing.

"You will find it a very good idea, and a most infallible remedy. I tried it once—kept up a cool two thousand with a little friend of mine; and after the unwonted exercise found myself, with blistered hands and refreshed spirits, quite in a state for a comfortable nap. Try it, Miss Elliott."

"Perhaps I will some time; you may recommend it to Edith too. I have passed the 'battledore and shuttlecock' stage, I am afraid."

"You mean you require more violent remedies. You are acknowledging a good deal, Miss Elliott. Has my fair Cousin Beatrix no power or spell to exorcise these spirits, 'black, or blue, or gray?' I believe there is a system of freemasonry between girls."

"Not between us," replied Dym, drawing herself up proudly. If her life had depended upon it, she could not have helped the sudden sharp tone of dissent. She took herself to task for it afterwards. Mr. Chichester would think her so unamiable, she thought. She was not aware of the hard repellent look her face took at such moments, breaking up the soft outline of her features, and marring their pleasantness with bitter lines. Dym's face was a sadly eloquent one, ten times more eloquent than her words. It already told a volume to Mr. Chichester, if he cared to read it.

Dym never knew what he thought of her curt speech. He went away with Edith shortly afterwards, bidding her good-by very kindly, but without offering his hand. Dym sat at the window watching them as they went through the square. What a grand-looking man he was, she thought; grander far

than Colonel Delaire, or any of those young officers. He held his little cousin by the hand, and the child walked along, looking eagerly up in his face, and chattering to him. Dym could fancy him smiling in his beard, in his droll way, as he answered her.

"I should think he could make people afraid of him sometimes, with all his good nature," she thought, as they passed round the farthest corner and were lost to view. "How his eyes flashed and how annoyed he looked when he spoke of people indulging their troubles! I don't fancy he has a good temper—not much better than mine. He must look like a lion when he is roused. Somehow his raillery has a pleasant sharpness, which does not hurt; while Miss Tressilian's sneers sting like nettles. I suppose he has a good heart, and that makes the difference," went on the young philosopher. She had quite forgotten her need of fresh air; or else exercise in the lonely deserted squares seemed else irksome to her. "After all, I am spinning in the moonlight," she said to herself, with something like remorse, as she put the school-room tidy, and then settled down to a piece of intricate knitting, which had to be partially unraveled and then put in order for Mrs. Tressilian. She cast an amused glance at the kitten now and then. Edith had insisted on a name being found for it, and there had been a perfect war of wits over the tea-table. Dym had suggested Tabitha; Edith thought Chance or Foundling more appropriate; but Mr. Chichester had insisted that nothing under three or even four syllables would do. A name must be hit upon that would perpetually remind them of the painful circumstances through which the victim had found entrance under their hospitable roof. Edith objected to the Howler, and thought Wanderer sounded too much like a race-horse; he would therefore, with their permission, fix on Lamentations as a peculiarly beautiful and touching name, a *sobriquet* to which poor Edith somewhat ruefully consented.

It was quite late before Edith returned, with her hands full of roses.

"Aren't these beautiful, Miss Elliott? Cousin Guy asked if you were fond of flowers, and he told me I must bring you home these, to make up for the walk you lost. He told me to tell you that they were ever so much better than moonshine. What did he mean by that, I wonder?"

"Mr. Chichester sent me these?" exclaimed Dym, hardly thinking she heard right. She laid her hot face against the cool fragrant heap that lay in her lap; the soft pinks and blush-tints gleamed pearly white in the semi-darkness; the gas-lamp at the corner of the dark square reflected the girl's bent head dimly.

"How dark it is! and I am ever so tired. Cousin Guy threatened to carry me once, and I was afraid he meant it. No, he did not send them exactly; he said it must be my present, in return for all the trouble I give you. Do I give you much trouble, Miss Elliott?" asked the child, earnestly. "There was a girl sitting at the corner, just by one of the park gates: her basket was nearly full, and she looked so tired and hungry, Cousin Guy made her empty it into my lap, and we sorted the bunches under the trees. I don't think she ever had so much money in her life before; she went on wiping her eyes with her shawl, and wishing the heavens to be his bed. I could not tell what she meant, till Cousin Guy said it was only gratitude, and that an Irish blessing did no harm; and then he told me to bring them all home to you."

"I see; thank you, Edith," returned Dym, quietly. She laid aside the roses reluctantly, as Edith clambered into her lap and nestled against her. Her thoughts wandered two or three times as she strove to interest herself in the child's eager descriptions.

"Did Mr. Chichester come in with you, Edie?" she asked at last, rousing herself from a reverie.

"Yes—no; he only brought me to the door. I heard him say something to James about calling again later. I know he inquired what time they would be back. Do you know, Miss Elliott, Cousin Guy asked me how it was that you and Trichy got on so badly together."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Dym, starting. "Edie, you must have misunderstood your cousin."

"Well, perhaps he did not say so in exactly those words. He asked me if I liked you better than Miss Dale; and when I said a hundred thousand times better, he laughed, and asked if Trichy did too. Of course I told him no, and how miserable she made you whenever she came into the school-room."

"Well!" ejaculated Dym, anxiously.

"I don't know whether he heard me, for he answered rather

dryly that it takes two to make a quarrel, and that Trichy might possibly be in the right sometimes; and when I said I was sure she never was, he scolded me for speaking so disloyally of my sister."

"And he was quite right," returned her governess, severely. "You ought to have known better, Edith." Dym put a stop to the conversation quite peremptorily, by insisting that it was time for her little charge to go to bed. She turned a deaf ear when Edith pleaded for further indulgence, and committed her remorselessly into Caroline's keeping, when that individual came to fetch her. Edith carried off some of the roses in revenge. Another time there would have been a playful scramble, but to-night her young governess was not in the mood. She contented herself with placing the remainder in water, and then sat down to her knitting again. "It takes two to make a quarrel," she said to herself, as she cast off rapid stitches on her needle; and perhaps if Guy Chichester had seen the puckered brow and involuntary frown at this moment, he might have avowed he was right.

Some two hours later, as the carriage set down the two ladies at the door of Lansdowne House, a tall dark figure, lounging against the railings, started forward and assisted them to alight.

"Why, it is Guy himself, I declare!" exclaimed a sleepy affectionate voice from the interior of the carriage.

Beatrix volunteered no welcome. "Mamma is very tired," was all she said, as she leaned lightly on her cousin's arm; and she swept past him up the steps in her white cloak. When they followed her into the inner drawing-room, they found her giving orders to her maid about closing the windows and bringing up the coffee. "You will have some in your dressing-room as usual, will you not, mamma?"

"Yes, my dear, I think so; but I have not yet spoken to Guy. My dear Guy, whatever brings you here so late to-night?"

"As usual, a whim, my dear aunt; but this is not my first visit. I have been well entertained by Edith, I assure you."

"You have been here all the evening?"

Beatrix looked up sharply.

"You had better ask him, mamma, how long he has been up in town," she observed, with a little *empressement*.

"Humph, my fair cousin; so that is the reason why your ladyship deigns to receive me so coldly," returned Guy, smiling mischievously. "Well, if I cared to evade your question, I could well do so. I have been in town—that is, at the West-end—some six hours, two of which were spent at Lansdowne House; and I have been six weeks in a place not fit to mention in aristocratic ears, but certainly not twelve miles from London."

"I thought so," came in disdainful tones from Beatrix. "Besides——"

"Besides what? Don't spare my feelings."

"You were seen——"

"How shocking!"

"There is nothing to laugh at, Guy. Colonel Delaire came in and told us one day he had met you."

"Indeed! Was it in the Seven Dials or Camden Town?"

"He did not mention the locality. He said you had your old shooting-coat on—I wish you would let me burn it—and looked rather as though you had fallen into the hands of the Philistines."

"My dear Beatrix, you know poor Frank was only laughing—you did look so shocked."

"Never mind, Aunt Celia; don't trouble yourself to apologize for me. Trichy knows I am a sad fellow—always in the hands of some Philistines or other; but it was mean of the colonel to show me up at headquarters."

"He thought we should be so pleased, dear Guy!"

"What! at hearing I was in the hands of the Philistines. For shame, Aunt Celia!"

"I wish you would not go on joking, Guy. You know mamma is dreadfully tired."

"That means I am to be silent, and that you are to go to bed, auntie; what a capital policeman you would make, Trichy; your very tone would make people 'move on.'"

Miss Tressilian moved away somewhat displeased; it was never her way to retort on an impertinence; she held herself aloof quite stiffly, while Guy interchanged an affectionate good-night with his elder relative. Neither did she seem to see him till he took the seat opposite to her, and deliberately helped himself to some coffee.

"Where is Charlie?" he asked, suddenly.

"At the opera; he will be in by and by."

"All right; I will look in on him to-morrow. I must not stay now, I suppose?"

"That's as you please. Mrs. Vivian will be down directly."

"How many tame cats do you keep about the house?" asked her cousin, mischievously.

"Mrs. Vivian is a friend," returned Beatrix, in her most repressive voice. "She is in trouble, poor thing! and it came into my head to-night that perhaps mamma might make it worth her while to stay on as Edith's governess."

"Edith has a governess, has she not?"

"Oh, yes—Miss Elliott; but she is going."

"Indeed," observed Guy, in the very driest of tones.

"Yes, she will not do at all. She will insist on having her own way in everything, and spoils Edith dreadfully."

"Edith seemed very happy, and much stronger in health, I thought."

"Ah, Mentone did us all good, mamma especially. Don't say a word to her about Miss Elliott's going, please. She is dreadfully infatuated on the subject, and I have had difficulty enough to make her see things properly. Miss Elliott is just the deceptive sort of person that can creep into any one's good graces."

"She has not crept into yours," muttered Guy.

"No, because I have perception enough to read her truly. I never knew any one more unfit for a governess; she and Edith waste half their time in childish romps."

"So much the better," was the gruff answer.

"And then she is so ill tempered—a perfect little fury when provoked."

Guy shrugged his shoulders. "Under no provocation, I suppose?"

Beatrix bit her lip. "You are so tiresome, Guy; there is no talking to you."

"Confess, Trichy, you are a little hard on her."

No answer.

"And so the poor little thing must go?"

"If you cannot find anything more interesting to talk about, I shall leave you, Guy."

"Not before Mrs. Vivian comes, I hope. How nice you look to-night, Trichy, with all those green waves, and puf-

fings, and white water-lilies. If I were an artist I would paint you as Undine."

"Or any other soulless being, I suppose," returned Beatrix, who, for some reason or other, was in an evident ill humor.

"Ah, Undine got her soul afterwards; so will you, when you have an Huldbrand of your own. By the by, what's this between you and Frank Delaire?"

Beatrix flushed up to her temples, and turned away.

"Ah, Undine, have I caught you?"

"Hush! here is Mrs. Vivian at last," as a brisk little widow, with dark restless eyes, and very airily attired, made her entrance. "You have been long enough making your appearance, Susan."

"I have been with dear Mrs. Tressilian. This is your cousin, Mr. Chichester—Oh, yes, I remember him." But Guy, who was subject to sudden sympathies and antipathies, replied very curtly to the lady's effusive greeting.

"I suppose it is no use waiting for Charlie any longer; he has gone in to supper somewhere," he observed, looking at his watch. "I have only ten minutes to spare, and you are tired, Beatrix."

"Not in the least. You know we are late people," was the careless answer, but she followed him into the outer room notwithstanding. On the threshold he stopped and took her hands.

"You had better tell me all about it," he said, with pleasant peremptoriness.

"About what?" But the tell-tale color began to rise again.

"About Frank Delaire. Are you engaged to him, Trichy?"

"I don't see what right you have to ask me that question," she replied, trying hard to resume her former cold manner.

"What right! Am I not a man and a cousin?"

"I don't see what that has to do with it."

"Don't you?"

"I may choose to keep my own counsel."

"Well done, Undine."

"Besides," trying to disengage herself, "I cannot see how my affairs can possibly interest you."

"It is sufficient interest to me to know that an honest fellow's constancy is to be rewarded by my pretty cousin's hand."

"Pshaw! pray allow me to go back to Mrs. Vivian."

"Unhand me, sir; that was what you meant. There, you are free—only suffer me to make the remark that you are in a singularly unapproachable mood to-night."

A sudden glitter as of tears sprang to Beatrix Tressilian's eyes.

"Because I am too proud to repose confidence where none is returned. Why should you consider you have the right to question me about Frank, when you refuse to answer a single question of mine?"

"Frank! Now I am sure I have to congratulate you."

"Don't. I hate congratulations."

"But is it really so, Trichy?"

"I suppose so," in a half-proud, half-melancholy voice.

"Dear Beatrix, I am so glad," replied her cousin, affectionately. "Frank Delaire is a capital fellow, and——"

"And what?"

"He will have an awfully pretty wife." But Beatrix drew back with almost a defiant gesture.

"Don't, Guy. I will not have you say that."

"Why should I not say it?"

"Because—I don't know! what are my looks to you? There, let us change the subject."

"With all my heart. Good-night, Trichy."

"Good-night. I suppose," catching her breath quickly, and not looking at him—"I suppose you are not rid of the old delusion yet, Guy?"

A quick contraction of the brow and a look of pain before Guy Chichester answered, "No, nor ever shall be;" and then somewhat abruptly he bade his cousin good-night.

CHAPTER III.

A HEADACHE AND A MYSTERY.

AFTER that, Mr. Chichester seemed to have taken up his abode at Lansdowne House.

Miss Elliott soon became aware of the fact; his visit was a sad hindrance to Edith's studies. True, he never again invaded the school-room, but Edith was sent for perpetually to bear him company in all sorts of walking and driving expeditions. Edith must go with them to the Royal Academy, or to some water-color exhibition; she accompanied them to concerts or morning visits to the various studios of his artist friends. Cousin Guy would not hear an excuse or word of remonstrance; no party of pleasure was formed without her. Why should not the child be amused as well as they? The governess wondered what Miss Tressilian thought of it.

Miss Tressilian said very little to any one at this time. She swept past the governess once or twice, looking prouder and sterner than ever. Dym saw her once standing in the embrasure of one of the hall windows, looking out with a very dissatisfied face, just after Mr. Chichester had ridden away with his little cousin from the door. Edith looked back and waved her hand to her sister, but Beatrix vouchsafed no response. The child looked a pretty picture in her blue habit, with her fair hair streaming down in the sunlight. She laughed aloud with delight as her white pony curveted and champed at his bit.

"What wonderful manes you both have!" observed her cousin, smiling. "Does Miss Elliott groom yours?"

"No; Caroline, of course. Is she not a beauty, my pretty Fanchette? Trichy, you had better have come with us, it is such a lovely day."

Beatrix turned away without vouchsafing an answer, and Miss Elliott was struck by the lowering look of discontent on her face as she slowly ascended the stairs.

Dym gained a curious insight into things by and by; the

child's artless prattle told her much—Cousin Guy and his wonderful sayings and doings were the constant theme of her conversation in the school-room. Dym tried to divert her mind into other channels, but soon gave up the attempt in despair. Edith would talk of nothing but her hero.

Cousin Guy had a great house; she had seen it once when she was a very, very little child. Mamma and Beatrix had taken her, and they had stayed a long time. Only Beatrix had quarreled with Aunt Constance.

Who was Aunt Constance? came involuntarily from Dym's lips.

Oh, she was Cousin Guy's mother. Cousin Guy lived with her. Edith could not remember the name of the place; they always spoke of it as the Happy Valley. Was it not Rasselas who lived with his brothers in the Happy Valley? Cousin Guy had a great black horse named Mahomet; he always had jokes about him, and said he had a great respect for the prophet; and he had called his beautiful Scotch collie Kelpie; was that not a funny name? And one of these days, when Beatrix was married, they were all going to stay up at Ingleside—that was the name of his house.

"Why not before?" asked Miss Elliott, rather curiously. She was growing a little weary of it, but somehow it interested her; was it because it took off her thoughts from her own sad life? she thought. Edith opened her eyes very widely at the question, and shook her head in a wise way.

Oh, Trichy wanted to go very much, but Cousin Guy had not asked her; they were not to come till she was married, and then Colonel Delaire would come too. Cousin Guy had told her a great secret—that Beatrix and Colonel Delaire were to marry each other. Did Miss Elliott know it; and was that the reason why Beatrix was never allowed to ride with any one else? She wanted to go with them the other day, but Cousin Guy would not allow it, and told her to wait for Frank. "I am sure," finished the child, thoughtfully, "that she likes Cousin Guy best."

"Hush, Edie; what a dreadful idea!" began Miss Elliott, reprovingly. "My dear child, do you know what you are saying?"

"But, Miss Elliott, I am sure of it. Trichy minds every word Cousin Guy tells her, and she is always contradicting

Colonel Delaire. Guy says she snubs him dreadfully—he made her cry once when he was scolding her—and he will call her Undine before them all, and that makes her angry; she is always cross now when he is not in the room."

"Really, Edith, I cannot allow you to go on talking in this manner. Get out your lesson-books; we are getting into dreadfully idle ways." And somewhat awed by her governess's unusually austere manner, Edith for once obeyed in silence.

But after all there were very few lessons done. Miss Elliott spent most of her time in solitude; she sat alone by one of the school-room windows the greater part of the day, busied over a heap of white drapery. The garret with its throne of boxes was forsaken. She preferred the long narrow window that looked down into the square; she used to watch them mount or dismount, or drive away gayly equipped for an afternoon in the park. Heaven knows what restless fancies filled the girl's head as the heavy barouche rolled from the door; in her vague way she was composing another sorrowful "Song of the Shirt;" she drew her needle out sometimes with an impatient sigh. "How dreadful it is to be young and to want things!" she would say to herself. "How can Will—how can any one understand? Is it wrong to have the want, I wonder? What was that he said? 'When women sit and dream, men go out and work.' I would rather be a man, of course; women have much the worst of it in everything; they cannot get away from themselves somehow."

Some one speaks of the divine hungers of the soul; there is surely a parching draught of thirst likewise. Young things crave hungrily to be satisfied, the bread and salt of life does not suffice them; they want the leeks and the cucumbers of Egypt—they demand pleasure as a right, fruition as a recompense.

Existence without its complement of gratified wishes is but a bare crust, which they take thanklessly from the All-Father. Youth often looks at death fearlessly, while age quails at it. With what mighty mysteries and awful questionings it dares to concern itself, as a child plays in the sunshine at the edge of an abyss! The Unknown, the Terrible, the Imaginative—these are what fascinate the neophyte, while it shuns the real actual joys of the present.

Dym's better nature, her own rational self irrespective of cobwebs, was to be brought into play by and by.

Edith had talked a great deal about a grand picnic that was to be held in Beatrix's honor—the officers of the regiment had got it up. They were to drive down to Richmond—Colonel Delaire in his four-in-hand, and the ladies in open carriages—and there was to be luncheon in the park, and a grand dinner at the Star and Garter. A little daughter of one of the officers was to be there, and it was decreed by the reigning powers, Beatrix and Cousin Guy, that Edith should bear her company.

Edith was of course in a transport of delight from morning to night; she was to have a fresh toilette for the occasion—Madame Laroche, Beatrix's dressmaker, was to furnish it. When the day arrived she came running into the school-room to show herself—a little golden-haired princess all in rose-colored clouds.

Miss Elliott gave a heavy sigh when the little apparition vanished from the door. She had not the heart to take up her usual station by the window. The school-room looked dark and close; outside the sun was shining, the birds sang in the garden of the square, the horses pranced gayly up and down before the house; there was plenty of light giddy laughter—a band broke into thundering music—a party of happy equestrians cantered by.

"I wonder if I shall ever be allowed a little enjoyment?" murmured poor Dym with tears in her eyes as she moved away. "I suppose I ought to be glad to have a whole long day to myself undisturbed. How hard it is to be good and mind what Will says! my poor Will, who never has a day's enjoyment in his life. There, I will try to be good and do the first disagreeable thing that comes to hand."

And as Dym arrived at this laudable determination, she bethought herself how often Miss Tressilian had wanted her help in sorting and arranging her music, and resolved to do it this time unasked.

The great drawing-room was almost oppressive in its perfumed heat and stillness; the door leading to the conservatory was open, and the fragrance of the flowers was almost overpowering. In the bustle the servants had omitted to open the window, and the outer blinds were not closed; the sun streamed

in on the satin couches and gilded mirrors. Dym, in her dark gingham dress, looked the only speck of shadow as she moved noiselessly hither and thither, picking up here a geranium-leaf and there a pair of light gloves crumpled and thrown down; a pale-blue scarf lay on an ottoman, a white-lace parasol was tossed down on a distant table—relics of the gay party.

Dym took it up and examined it with almost childish pleasure. "How nice to use such beautiful things!" she thought; but she dropped it with a startled movement as slow uncertain steps came up from the conservatory, and to her astonishment Mr. Chichester's broad shoulders filled up the doorway.

Dym could not help a little cry of surprise.

"You here, Mr. Chichester! Have you not gone with the others?"

"It appears not," he returned, dryly. "Miss Elliott, I am ashamed to trouble you; but would you mind pulling down some blind or other, and shutting out that horrible glare? I have the most confounded headache;" and he threw himself down on a couch that stood near him, with such an expression of suffering that Dym looked at him with some perplexity and trouble.

"Are you ill, Mr. Chichester?" she inquired, timidly, for the brown-bearded face had a livid look on it that frightened her.

Mr. Chichester opened his eyes impatiently at the question.

"Only this infernal—I beg your pardon, this horrible headache. I had a slight sunstroke once—ugh!" the monosyllable evidently wrung from him by a fresh access of torture. "Oh, that glare!" he repeated, in a voice that quickened Dym into sudden activity.

Dym understood all about it now, and was ashamed of her needless question. She closed most of the outer blinds and threw open windows and doors till a refreshing current of air rewarded her efforts; she even moved away a vase of flowers that stood near him.

"I know all about these headaches," she said very softly, but with some natural hesitation. "I have often treated them. I think I can give you a little relief, if you will let me."

Probably Mr. Chichester was past answering, for he merely moved his lips in assent without opening his eyes.

"I have never seen Will look quite as bad as that," she thought, as she hurried off to Mrs. Tressilian's room in search of handkerchiefs and eau-de-Cologne. She stood by him with almost professional gravity as she changed the cool fragrant cloths every moment.

"I could never get ice for Will," thought the poor little sister; "there, I think he is beginning to feel a little relieved already," as the deep furrows of pain relaxed and smoothed themselves out.

What an odd position! Dym gave a comical little smile once at herself. Was it right? Ought she to have sent for any assistance? Would Miss Tressilian blame her? Would Mr. Chichester himself think it strange when he once fairly roused from this trance of suffering? Dym had not time to think it out. A groan from her patient seemed to rebuke such worldly-wise caution. "We must do as we would be done by," she thought stoically; "it can never be wrong to relieve pain. Will calls it a woman's mission." And emboldened by this last thought, she even ventured to lift the brown clenched hands and moisten the hot palms, and then went on steeping the handkerchiefs in iced water, with all the better heart that they needed now to be less frequently changed.

It is impossible to tell whether nursing is ever really to be taught or acquired, but it is certain that the instinct is born in some women. Dym Elliott had not served an apprenticeship to the sick-room; she had rarely seen people ill; in most cases she would have been ignorant of all remedies, nevertheless it came naturally to her to move noiselessly and speak softly. The small nervous fingers had an exquisite touch of firmness and sympathy; they lay so lightly on Guy Chichester's throbbing nerves that he scarcely stirred under them, and though still suffering too much to speak, the heavy frown of pain lessened perceptibly.

A strange stolen sense of pleasure crept into Dym's mind; it was so sweet to be useful, and to feel her services were needed by any one; it made her feel less lonely, and more akin to the outer world—to be allowed to minister suffices some women. She smiled quite happily when she found, at the end of an hour, that he had fallen into a refreshing sleep. She sat behind him, fanning the flies away and making a soft current

of air round him. The silence, the heat, the fragrance, the continued movement lulled her into all manner of pleasing reveries. At the first sign of awakening she crept away and begged Caroline to make one of her cups of delicious coffee, and then came back and administered it with the same old-fashioned gravity.

Mr. Chichester glanced at her rather drolly over the rim of his cup; he looked his ordinary self again, only very pale, and there were dark lines under his eyes.

"Where have you learned to cure people, Miss Elliott? Have you some wonderful power to charm away headaches?"

"I have seen my brother suffer in the same way, but he never looked quite as ill as you did," returned Dym, quietly; "and you must not talk now," she added, as she shook up his pillow and carried away his empty cup. "There is the hand-bell near you, Mr. Chichester, and I shall send up James with some luncheon presently. I should try and go to sleep again if I were you."

"Are you going to leave me, then?" observed Mr. Chichester, raising himself on his elbow; but whether Dym heard or not she had already disappeared, and when he woke up from a second refreshing nap the promised luncheon had arrived, a fact which Kiddle-a-wink notified by jumping on him and licking his face to arouse him.

Miss Elliott had a second patient before night. The long excitement and drive in the hot sun had been too much for Edith, always a delicate child; towards evening she had flagged, and, to her mother's alarm, feverish symptoms appeared. Mr. Chichester had sufficiently recovered from his indisposition to meet the returning party at the door. He received his little favorite in his arms, and after looking in her face with undisguised anxiety, quietly carried her up-stairs, and begged Caroline to summon Miss Elliott while he sent for a doctor.

"There is not the slightest occasion, Guy," remonstrated Beatrix, who had followed him, and now stood by the bedside in her gay dress, looking down at her little sister. "Edith often has these feverish attacks, and Caroline knows exactly how to treat them. If mamma wants a doctor, well and good; perhaps it is safest to be cautious in such cases; but there is not the slightest need to disturb Miss Elliott."

"Are you going to sit up with her yourself then, Beatrix?"

"My dear Guy, after this fatiguing day surely you would not ask such a thing."

"No, I think Miss Elliott would be the proper person; she seems fond of the child."

"So is Caroline."

"Perhaps so. I have no doubt Caroline is a most valuable person, but I have a strong dislike to leave children to the tender mercies of any servant," persisted Mr. Chichester, with a touch of displeasure in his voice. "If neither you nor Miss Elliott sit up with the child, I shall remain here myself."

Beatrix's sole answer was a scornful toss of the head as she turned away. Evidently she resented her cousin's interference, but was powerless to oppose him. Mr. Chichester waited a moment till he saw Miss Elliott enter the room, and then he followed his cousin down-stairs. Dym gave a little start of surprise when she saw him; but he took no notice of her, and very soon both she and Susan were absorbed by their little patient, who was manifesting all a child's restlessness and impatience. The doctor did not make his appearance till late, and then spoke very vaguely. It was the heat—she had been over-excited lately—the brain, a very sensitive one, had been over-wrought—something or somebody had evidently disturbed her; but, after all, it might only be a recurrence of the old attacks—they must keep her quiet, perfectly quiet, and free from agitation—he had always warned them against any form of excitement for her.

Dym, as she felt the child's throbbing pulses, thought Cousin Guy's good nature might probably work fearful mischief. It was very difficult to enforce the quiet that was recommended. Edith would talk; she pillowed her hot head on her governess's arm, and babbled on endlessly of the green park, and the sunshine that made her head ache, and the champagne that some one made her taste; and then wandered on confusedly about something she had overheard that morning; some one—she thought it was Trichy—had said Miss Elliott was going away,—yes, she was sure it was Trichy; it was just like her ill nature. Was Miss Elliott going? She must not—oh, she must not! and here Edith clung to her and became so excited that Dym grew quite alarmed, and begged Susan to go down and see if her mother or sister was still awake and could come to her.

Susan came back after some delay, and the expected aid arrived in the form of Mr. Chichester, who hastily explained that after the doctor's favorable bulletin he had persuaded his aunt and cousin to retire to bed, as they were dreadfully fatigued with the day's excitement, and that he was only sitting up himself an hour or two in case anything should be required.

Dym thought of his day of suffering, and wondered at his imprudent self-forgetfulness. She drew back into the shadow of the curtain as Edith stretched out her arms delightedly to her cousin. It was curious and touching to see the intimacy between the child and the man, they both so evidently understood each other. Guy Chichester sat down on the edge of the bed, and fondled the little hot hands that stroked his beard.

"Well now, Edith, what's the meaning of all this disturbance? Why don't you lie still and go to sleep as a good child should? You are not half so obedient as Kiddle-a-wink."

"Because I can't, Cousin Guy," moaned the child. "It is so hot and I'm so restless; and, oh dear, whatever made Trichy say such a thing?"

"You ungrateful little mortal! and Miss Elliott has been fanning you for the last hour. Come now, what did Trichy say? Some of her nonsense, I expect."

"Oh no; it is all true; Caroline says it is. Cousin Guy, won't you go and ask mamma and Trichy not to let Miss Elliott go away? They say she has only another fortnight, and that that dreadful Mrs. Vivian is to come; and, oh dear, I do love Miss Elliott so!"

Mr. Chichester gave a low whistle.

"Whew! that is what is troubling the small head and making it so hot, is it?"

But Edith stopped him appealingly.

"Oh, do, Cousin Guy; do make them not send her away! You can't think how nice and kind she is; and she does not want to go—do you, Miss Elliott?"

Dym came forward in much distress.

"I do not know who has been telling her. It is a great pity; I knew she would go on in this way. Edie dear, you must be good about it. Don't you think your mamma and sister know what is best for you?"

"It is not mamma; it is Trichy!" cried the child, vehemently. "You know Trichy hates you, and makes you cry. It is she who is sending you away. Ask Caroline. Oh, Cousin Guy, you can always make her do what you like; do, do make her promise to keep dear Miss Elliott!"

"Do you wish me to try?" asked Mr. Chichester, looking at Miss Elliott for the first time.

Dym's angry blush was a sufficient answer.

"On no account. Mr. Chichester, please take no notice of what she says. I wish they had not brought you up. Edith, you must be reasonable; little girls cannot understand these things. I would not stop now, if your sister were to ask me to remain."

"Don't mind her," pleaded the child; "she is hurt, of course. Do what I ask you, Cousin Guy."

"Edith, I desire you will not; I shall be very angry. Mr. Chichester, you will not——" Dym broke down between stammering and hot flushes.

Mr. Chichester shrugged his shoulders with a good-humored look of perplexity.

"You don't want to make my head bad again between you, do you? I feel warning symptoms. Edith, you naughty child, lie down and go to sleep. Don't you know children have no business to meddle with things they do not understand?" Then, as Edith's lip quivered and she looked ready to cry, "There, go to sleep, pussie, and I promise you that Miss Elliott shall not go if I can prevent it." And with that Edith allowed herself to be pacified.

Miss Elliott signed to Caroline to take her place by the bedside, and quietly followed Cousin Guy from the room.

"Mr. Chichester."

"Well?" halting in the lamp-lighted passage, and regarding her disturbed face with some amusement. "You don't want me to break my word to Edith?"

"You ought not to have promised such a thing. I do beg, I entreat, that you will not speak to Miss Tressilian on my behalf."

"I am thinking of Edith," with a contradictory twinkle of the eyes.

The young governess colored, but maintained her ground nevertheless.

"Edith will soon get used to Mrs. Vivian. I think it is better for her, too, that I should go. I am very young and inexperienced—every one says so. I do my best." Here something rose in the girl's throat, and she hurried on: "I do beg, Mr. Chichester, that you will not interfere in this matter." An attempt at dignity verging on the pathetic.

"May I ask one question? Is it my aunt's wish that you should go?"

"I think not; I believe Miss Tressilian has persuaded her that I am unfit to manage Edith."

"Have you another situation in view?"

"No," very sadly.

"And you will have some difficulty in finding one?"

"I am afraid so."

"Forgive me if I seem impertinent, but is this thing of consequence to you?"

Something sympathetic in the tone broke down Dym's reserve, and the tears came into her dark eyes.

"Of every consequence. I have only Will—that is my brother. We two are alone in the whole world, and he is only a poor curate, and cannot afford to keep me."

"Hush, don't cry! There are worse troubles than poverty. There, go back to your patient."

"And you will not speak?"

"*Cela dépend.* Supposing you shake hands and say good-night."

Dym put out a hand very timidly.

"Good night, Mr. Chichester."

"Good-night, Miss Elliott. By the by, I have never thanked you for your skillful nursing this morning."

"There is no need for thanks. I was very glad to do my best for you. Are you quite sure you are better?"

"Humph, tolerably so! That brother of yours must be a lucky fellow to get such nursing, Miss Elliott. There, good-night. Don't spin any more cobwebs." And Mr. Chichester turned on his heel with a good-humored nod and went downstairs.

Miss Elliott had not much more trouble with her little patient that night; she very soon dropped off into a feverish sleep, which lasted with short intermission till the morning.

After all, Beatrix's prognostications were correct,—it was

only one of the child's ordinary attacks, accelerated by excitement and fatigue. For a few days she was ill enough to keep Miss Elliott a close prisoner to her sick-room; for, with the obstinacy of a spoiled child, she would hardly permit her sister to come near her, and even her mother and Caroline were barely tolerated. Cousin Guy paid regular visits, and was always welcomed by a languid smile. When she was well enough, he would stop and play with her for an hour or two. He took very little notice of Edith's nurse beyond a cheerful word or two. Dym would sit apart sewing in the window, quite content to be a listener. She could not help a smile now and then at his droll sallies, but at other times she looked drooping, almost sad. The hour for her departure was drawing near, and she began to suspect that Mr. Chichester's promised mediation had failed.

Her suspicion was soon verified.

One afternoon, when Edith was well enough to be carried down to the drawing-room, Dym was standing listlessly by the school-room window, fondling Kiddle-a-wink, who often found his way up-stairs, when a sudden eager prick of the ears and a pleased bark made her turn round.

"Is there any admittance for Kiddle-a-wink's master?"

"I don't know—I suppose so," stammered Dym, nervously. She was a little afraid of Mr. Chichester's quizzical eyes.

"Edith is down-stairs in the drawing-room, sir."

"As I carried her there myself, I suppose I am aware of that fact. I also strongly suspect that my cousin Beatrix has just ridden from the door with Colonel Delaire, and that my aunt is asleep."

"Does Edith want me, Mr. Chichester?"

"On the contrary, I believe it is I who want you. I have come to tell you, Miss Elliott, that, as usual, I have been a most egregious blunderer,—that, in fact, I have failed *in toto*."

"So I supposed," was the almost inaudible answer.

"Verdict, 'Served me right.' I suppose I ought to have taken your advice, and not meddled in matters too high for me. I wonder how they would ever preserve the balance of power in a woman's parliament; there would be nothing but opposition benches,—no ayes, all noes. Where do you women manage to invest your vast stock of pride?"

"Miss Tressilian is very proud, Mr. Chichester."

"So is somebody else,—six of one and half a dozen of another. I wash my hands of you both. Ulysses ploughing the sea-shore with his ill-matched team has an easy task compared to a man who has to reconcile two angry women."

"Edith represents the infant Telemachus, I suppose," returned Dym, trying to enter into his humor.

"Exactly so. Well, as I have got into hot water for your sake, I hope you will be grateful anyhow. I have got my *congé* from Lansdowne House."

"Do you mean you and Miss Tressilian have quarelled? Oh, Mr. Chichester!"

"Don't alarm yourself; a difference of opinion is not uncommon between us. My cousin Beatrix is not a manageable woman. I am not fond of manageable women. When I am provoked to say anything specially bitter, I generally pack my bag."

"Indeed!" Dym could find no satisfactory answer to this strange confidence.

"I believe James is packing mine now. I am an erratic animal, Miss Elliott, a large edition of the Miss Mowcher type,—'here, there, and everywhere.' By the by, if I hear of anything to your advantage, shall I advertise?"

"I don't understand you," began Dym, in a puzzled tone.

"I will explain myself, then. If I hear of a very young governess being wanted immediately, on fabulous terms, how am I—they—how is any one to communicate with you?"

"Oh, I see. You mean, I am to give you my address, or rather my brother's."

"Exactly so; brothers are very safe persons."

Dym did not quite know what to make of the mocking tones; older and wiser people were seldom quite sure when Guy Chichester was speaking in jest or earnest. She gravely waited while he produced his pocket-book, and obediently wrote down her address:

"THE REV. WILLIAM ELLIOTT,
3, *Paradise Row* (*leading out of Malden Road*), *Kentish Town*."

She half fancied that she saw a start of surprise as Mr. Chi-

chester read her entry. He gave her a quick, searching look, and seemed about to speak, and then checked himself. When he next spoke he had resumed his ordinary manner.

"Where does your brother work?"

"At St. Luke's. Such an ugly old church, and such a poor parish. The vicar, Mr. Benedict, is away on sick leave. Will is sole curate in charge."

"Did he advertise in the *Guardian* for help long time ago?"

"Yes, when he felt himself breaking down; but no one would accept the miserable stipend he offered them, and so he has to go on alone. There has been a great deal of sickness about lately, and he has been miserably overworked, the night-schools come so heavily on him."

"I dare say. Thank you, Miss Elliott, for being so frank with me; I am really anxious to serve you if I can—if only," he hesitated, "for Edith's sake, and because of my cousin's injustice to you. You know I am Edith's guardian?"

"I did not know it, sir."

"Probably not. Well, I don't care to exert my authority unnecessarily. Perhaps, after all, though you can't help it, you are rather young. Come, Kiddle-a-wink, my fine fellow, we must be going. Adieu! *au revoir*, Miss Elliott."

"It is good-by altogether, sir; I am leaving the day after to-morrow."

"So much the better; delays are weak. Never mind; it is *au revoir* for all that." And, with a kindly shake of the hand, Guy Chichester left the room.

The next day the Reverend William Elliott received the following curt missive:

"Tired of my West-end life already, and in a frightfully bad temper. Hard work the only cure. Shall take the night-schools to-morrow, and keep on for the next three weeks. Tell Bill Saunders to be careful, and have none of his nonsense for the future. Hope your cough is better.—Yours to command,

"AN HONEST FRIEND AND WELL-WISHER TO ST. LUKE'S."

CHAPTER IV.

NUMBER THREE PARADISE ROW.

I SUPPOSE most people have agreed that Camden Town is hardly to be considered as a fashionable locality. It is possible to find it on the map. But an inhabitant of Belgravia will hardly so compromise himself or herself as to be quite sure of its exact locality. Hampstead may be mentioned with a certain amount of caution, and there is something delightfully Bohemian in the thought of St. John's Wood. Artists and singers group themselves there in colonies, which trench somewhat fastidiously on the border-land which vaguely hints at Kilburn. Regent's Park has a strong flavor of gentility, which, much diluted, spreads itself out with some difficulty to the green confines of Primrose Hill; but Camden Town! breathe it not into ears polite!

It is out of the radius, unredeemable, a spot of earth abandoned to the spoiler; one of a triumvirate, for its twin sisters, Kentish and Somers Towns, must veil their heads under the same genteel obloquy. People who have heard of Whitechapel, of the Seven Dials, of Poplar, of the Isle of Dogs, from the "Records of the City Missionary," will somehow comprehend these places in the same dim category as regions where such people ought to work—as outskirts where the overflowing lava of population in the great city may spread itself out and cover the ground, drinking in fresh country air, and gaining glimpses of green fields and trees, till the endless rows of thinly-walled houses shut out the transient view; till the comfortless lodging-houses fill to suffocation; till the squalor of poverty and a nation's ever-increasing need devour everything like Pharaoh's hungry kine; till room and more room are fiercely demanded, and the crowds of children playing in the gutters seem, with their innocent, famine-worn faces, to protest unconsciously against their own existence.

"Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones—" What, these little ones! these hungry and ignorant blasphemers,

from whose words we recoil in horror, from whom we draw aside our very garments to defend them against their contaminating touch; these children who drink in vice with their mothers' milk; who know nothing but to starve and lie and curse; these little ones! "Whosoever shall offend one of these—"

These things are the hieroglyphics of life—the mystery which nineteenth-century philanthropists are striving to solve with compulsory education, with pitiable gifts of larger light, which shall only serve to show them the deeper darkness of their surroundings. True, the light advances. Many are the earnest workers, the earnest thinkers, who have set themselves but this one life-task—to fight till death against the serried ranks of evil; who will carry if it be but a flickering torch-light into these dark places of the earth, if haply they can rescue one soul, one starving diseased body, nay, even one of these little ones, who suffer the martyrdom of the Innocents a hundred times, whose dumb cries are unheard on earth, but which fill heaven.

These are the true heroes, the heroines, the faithful servants in the Parable, the workers in the vineyards. Still is the work never-ceasing, while the laborers are few.

Few people envied the Reverend William Elliott, the hard-working curate at St. Luke's. Some of the most earnest-minded of his flock helped and encouraged him, it is true; but the rest—those even of his poorer parishioners—pitied and somewhat looked down on him.

He was a poor man as they were, dwelling among them in a home scarcely better than theirs,—a man, too, that could not bear his poverty with any special grace or dignity,—such were his infirmities,—but who lived out his blameless and suffering life with the cheerfulness and constancy of a martyr.

Few more noble characters than William Elliott, few more sorely tried lives.

By birth a gentleman, and with a gentleman's refined mind and fastidious taste, with great powers of intellect, and of a naturally sociable temperament, Providence—or, as people somewhat irreverently term it, Fate—had removed him from the studious seclusion of college life, and the delights of cultivated and congenial fellowship, to a curate's hard-working life and bare pittance at St. Luke's, Kentish Town.

Not that he regretted this transition: in spite of its poverty and drawbacks, William Elliott had the purest enthusiasm for his work. From the first he had grasped the deep responsibilities of his vocation. There was never any doubt, any looking back, in his mind. To be the poor man's priest, and to live among poor men, constituted his sole ambition. Nevertheless, there had come to the patient soldier of the Cross a long interval of anxious waiting, of hope and fear deferred, as to whether he should ever be permitted to buckle on his harness again and go down to the battle.

In the prime of his youth, in the first freshness of his work, when he had only just taken priest's orders, he had been struck down by a violent fever, caught during his ministrations beside a dying bed. It was badly treated and carelessly nursed. His landlady shared the universal panic, and left the young clergyman to the tender mercies of a hireling, who neglected and robbed him. His recovery was tedious, and was further delayed by the harassed state of his mind and the want of even necessary comforts.

He had nothing to relieve the tedium of those dreary days spent in that close back room; no one to sit by him and bring him the fruit and flowers he babbled about in his delirium; no womanly sympathy to lessen the irritability of convalescence or restrain imprudence; and so it was that one damp cloudy-looking day he crept out from his sick-room, and, tempted by a transient sun-gleam, stole slowly away down the empty streets.

He did this again and again, and one day, impatient of his weakness, taxed his feeble powers to reach a given spot, where he could see the green fields of Highgate and feel the soft winds of heaven blow freshly over him. It was a somewhat sultry evening. A bricklayer, smoking his pipe by a stile, drew back to let the sick-looking gentleman pass, and, in answer to his languid "good-evening," muttered out, hoarsely, that "there was going to be a rare thunderstorm and a mort of rain, and wise folks would house themselves as quick as possible."

"What do you mean, my man?" asked the young clergyman, looking up at the lurid clouds with some alarm. "I have been walking further than I intended, and have not been thinking. Will the storm break over us soon, do you say?"

The man held up his hand in answer: both heard the low rumblings of distant thunder.

"Better go back, sir; there is no shelter further on," he answered, civilly enough.

"Thank you, I think I will," answered William Elliott, faintly. He had been very happy a moment before, thinking out little bits of a sermon he hoped to preach the following Sunday. Now all at once he felt an oppression and failure of strength; the heavy atmosphere suffocated him; he dragged his feet more wearily every step, and had to pause now and then, and lean against a fence for support. The man was right: in a few minutes the storm had broken over them.

And what a storm!

It beat down on the poor invalid with overwhelming fury. William Elliott just remembered creeping under an old wall for shelter, with a confusing consciousness of blinding flashes and the crashing of thunder, followed by torrents of rain; then darkness, a smell of cool fresh earth, a strange numbness and giddiness, followed by a blank.

He never knew how long he lay in that strange fainting-fit of his under the old wall. The storm was over, the birds were singing in the evening sunshine, the fields were full of wet fragrance, when some artisans returning from their work found him, a dead man as they thought, and carried him home.

And in the home of those humble Samaritans William Elliott fought out that desperate life-combat.

"Better he should die," they said, who watched that terrible conflict.

"Yes, if it be His will," answered William Elliott.

But he never prayed to die. In all his torture his manhood was strong within him. In his hours of direst anguish, when his whole body was convulsed, and they marveled how he could and did endure, no rebellious murmurs escaped his lips; and even when the pain forced tears from his eyes, his only complaint was, "Oh, if I could only bear it better! Do you think it will soon be over?"

When the clergyman of the place, an old man, visited him, and exhorted him to patience, telling him for his comfort that death could not long be delayed, William Elliott shook his head with a sorrowful smile.

"I never thought any one could halt so long in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. It is weary work to be waiting outside as it were; but," with a little shudder, "they won't

open the door for me just yet." And then he slowly, and with weak voice, repeated the words, "I shall not die, but live." And he was right.

It was a complication of rheumatic fever and sciatica, and for many months he remained helpless in the hands of his nurses. When he grew a little better, they asked if he had no relative who could come to him.

"Only a young sister," he replied, with a sigh; but when they implored him to send for her, he refused. Dym must not come to him; she was at a school in Paris, preparing herself for her future work; it would never do to interrupt or break off her studies, they could not afford it. And then he went on to explain, in his gentle way, that they were very poor; that this long illness was draining the little stock of money that he had laid aside for such contingencies; that it was well to face such things; that it would be many, many months, perhaps years, before he would be fit for work, and even then he might be crippled. Might it not even be that Dym would have to support them both?

And so the letters that reached Dym in her foreign school were cheerful ones, though written in a strange hand, and spoke lightly of his illness. He had rheumatism very badly, and could not use his pen; he had caught cold, and his back and limbs were affected. It might be a long time before he could resume his work; but he had some money laid by, and he must draw on that, though he had been saving it so carefully for their future home. But Dym must not be anxious, he had kind nurses and plenty of comforts; and she must work hard now, and come home by and by.

Dym could not quite banish the anxiety, but she had plenty of faith. She did not believe that Will would deceive her about himself; presently, when he could resume his cramped handwriting, she grew more cheerful. She wondered sometimes why he still delayed applying for another curacy, and fancied he was not strong enough for work; but she had no conception of the truth.

Her brother had spared her two years of pain; but he could not relieve her from the shock of first seeing him.

Dym uttered a cry of anguish when she saw him at the station. He was her own brother, from whom she had parted three years ago, but she would have passed him in the street.

True, he had told her jokingly in one of his letters that he was very crooked, and had taken to spectacles, as his eyes troubled him a good deal; and Dym had fretted over this for three days; but even this had not prepared her for the change. She had seen him last a fresh-colored youth, erect, and rather tall than otherwise; now he was bowed in so singular a manner that people spoke of him as "the deformed clergyman;" and when he moved he dragged one leg as he walked. The bright complexion had faded into sickly sallowness, as of one in habitual suffering; and the beautiful eyes looked changed in expression, seen through those hideous glasses; while, young as he was, barely eight-and-twenty, his fair hair was already touched with gray.

"Oh, Will, Will!" And the poor little sister clung to him in such a passion of tears that, albeit unused to such luxuries, William Elliott was obliged to hurry her into the safe obscurity of a cab, and in the darkness to take off his own damp glasses and wipe them again and again.

Dym never forgave him that long deceit, neither would she ever leave him without first extorting from him a faithful promise that she should come and nurse him if he were ill again.

"But I am never going to be ill again," with a shudder half real and half pretended.

"No; but you must tell me when anything ails you, and then I can judge for myself; remember, Will, you have promised—when you are in pain."

"My dear child, when am I without pain?"

"Oh, of course your rheumatism is troublesome; the doctor says you must expect that. All I want to know is, if you have anything out of the common, if you have caught cold or your eyes are bad, and how you will manage when you begin work again. Do you think Mr. Benedict will be kind to you?"

"Undoubtedly. I told him all about it, Dym, and how no one would employ me because of my infirmities, and that you and I were making up our minds in earnest to starve; and he seemed quite touched. Of course he cannot tell yet how far I am fit for work, but I am to know in three months' time; and I'll merit my name yet, Dym, and be Conqueror to the last." A pet name she had called him from a child.

So it was that William Elliott won his place at St. Luke's, and kept it too, in spite of weak health, uncertain powers, and the discontented murmurs of, happily, a minority of the congregation, who could not brook the curate's peculiarities and, above all, his poverty.

For he was very poor, and was not ashamed to own himself as such. What it cost him to keep himself, to a certain extent as a gentleman, and yet not to be in debt, was known only to the brother and sister; and, as Dym herself honestly avowed, she was only a burden to him.

Dym was the dearest little creature in the world to those who loved her, but she was certainly one of Mr. Chichester's "unmanageable women"—she had a temper, and she had not learned to govern it; she was as jealous and proud as a small Lucifer, and people found it out, and would not put up with it.

Dym could not keep her places; she had only been a governess for eight months, and had already tried three situations and had lost them.

At Miss Northcote's, where she had been pupil-governess, she had sided with the elder girls, and rebelled against lawful authority—the pupil-teacher was in all the mischief that was going on. In three weeks Miss Northcote wrote in despair to her brother to take her away.

Dym had never seen such a look on Will's face as when he came to fetch her.

Dym cried till her eyes were sore. She would much rather he had scolded her, but he never said a word—only when he found her another situation in the same capacity in a smaller school, he gravely reminded her that after their father's death he had spent half the little stock of money he had left them in giving her a good education; that he could not at present afford to maintain her; and that unless she could govern her childish temper it would be the worst for them both.

Dym cried again, and promised, and really did very well in the beginning; but the work was too hard for a girl of seventeen. Mrs. Saunders was a rigid disciplinarian and had small sympathy with girlish failings. Dym's spirits flagged, her health suffered, she got into careless ways, and then grew miserable at her failures. Mrs. Saunders had small patience with either faults or penitence: she told Miss Elliott in pretty plain terms that such fine ladies would not suit her; her French

accent was perfect, but her temper was execrable—in short, she was not cut out for a governess.

"I must teach, or I must starve," cried the girl, in a little fury of despair, turning fiercely upon her tormenter. Somehow, the blunt manner did not affront Mrs. Saunders; on the contrary, her pity was somewhat moved by it; she took the girl, not unkindly, by the hand after that, and gave her a long harangue on the duties of gentleness and patience in woman—to which Dym listened rebelliously—and then she pushed a letter towards her. It was from a lady—a connection of one of her girls—who was in sad trouble about her governesses. She wanted a very young lady; youth no obstacle—a cheerful, well-mannered young person, and tolerably well educated—who could undertake the charge of her little girl Edith, a very delicate child, who required careful supervision and a few daily lessons; anything like real study being forbidden by the doctors.

"And I should say this place would just suit you, Miss Elliott. You are too young; and, if you will permit me to say so, too frivolous, for the drudgery of school. I know Mrs. Tressilian slightly; she will take any young person I recommend; she is very solicitous about this child, as she has already lost two daughters at the same age: so you understand the responsibility will hardly be so light as the work."

Dym nodded and smiled. One child, too much study interdicted—the place seemed just made for her. She listened in a sort of rapturous dream to the many prosy directions of the good schoolmistress. Here, at least, she could have a little time to herself, and enjoy something like pleasure.

So it was that Dym Elliott came to Lansdowne House; but, as in all Paradises, even here the serpent was not wanting. Dym had plenty of time to herself—she had leisure and loneliness to indulge in fancies to her heart's content—but it might be doubted whether Mrs. Saunders's crowded dormitories were not a more wholesome discipline. Dym began to exaggerate, and then to brood over her exaggerations. She kept her outworks undefended, and so exposed her citadel to sudden attacks. Miss Tressilian's manner was not a pleasing one to dependants: she disliked Dym's bluntness from the first. Dym's pride was always catching fire. Sometimes she bore in silence; oftener she retaliated. Never a meek woman, the

"soft answer that turns away wrath" somehow never came at the right moment. Mrs. Tressilian liked her, but her manner to Beatrix was offensive. Both were to blame, Guy Chichester thought, and Mr. Chichester was generally right; his only mistake was in taking part with the losing side.

He generally blundered in his generosity.

Those sort of people make great mistakes in their lives. Guy Chichester's mistakes were not few. But he was, nevertheless, a good fellow for all that.

Revenons à nos moutons, as our neighbors say.

The Reverend William Elliott lived in No. 3, Paradise Row, the row being on the shady side of a street leading out of the Malden Road, within easy distance of Mother Shipton.

There is nothing to find fault with in the air; nevertheless, the locality itself is not a savory one. The streets are tolerably wide, but the houses are too densely populated; there are too much poverty and too many cheap fish-shops to be quite wholesome; still there are worse places than Malden Road, and certainly far worse than Paradise Row.

The row itself was a quiet respectable row, much affected by dressmakers and seamstresses. A tailor lived at one end, and, if the truth must be told, a mangle had lately been advertised at the other end. Mr. Elliott always said he did not mind the tailor—wasn't one of Kingsley's heroes, Alton Locke, a tailor?—but, as he observed, pathetically, the mangle was too much for him—it meant a coming down of gentility, and nothing but a reduction of rent and taxes could repair that damage. Somebody said a sweep had taken the upper floor; if so, No. 26 had certainly been delivered into the hands of the Philistines. There must be limits to everything, and a sweep was beyond those limits.

For William Elliott had a certain sweet wholesome humor of his own. And its beauty was, that it hurt no one.

No. 3 was tenanted by those same good Samaritans who had tended the young clergyman through his long trouble; as far as it lay in his power he had repaid their kindness. Love begets love—a strong friendship grew between these worthy people and their patient. When he moved to St. Luke's, having heard of employment in that place, Dick Maynard and his wife moved too. The little furniture that Mr. Elliott had accumulated in his college life was quite sufficient for the two

small rooms which were all he could afford out of his slender income. In Dym's brief visits, a small, barely-furnished apartment at the top of the house was allotted her by the worthy couple, who had lost all their children but one—little lame Dick, as he was called. Dick slept in the little room next to Dym's, and whistled her awake in the morning. He kept a family of young linnets and a couple of white mice in his room, and had a habit of playing on the accordion at three o'clock in the morning. With the exception of these amiable peculiarities, and the incessant sound of his crutches on the uncarpeted stairs and floor, Dick was a very harmless neighbor, and kept the dark mornings tuneful like a sprightly little cock.

Dick had a vast admiration for Miss Elliott, whom he called "his pretty lady;" but the whole of his child's worship was given to her brother. Ever since the time when he had sat curled up at the foot of the sick-bed for hours together, amusing the poor invalid with his incessant childish prattle, an intense love and reverence for Mr. Elliott had crept into his simple heart. Deprived by his affliction of all the usual boyish sports—for he had been lame from his birth—the little fellow's greatest happiness was to be allowed to sit in Mr. Elliott's room, where he would amuse himself for a whole day together, without interrupting the composition of a sermon, and he would remain so quiet that sometimes Mr. Elliott would forget the child's presence altogether.

Dick said his simple lessons to Mr. Elliott daily. The few fragments of leisure that remained to the overworked curate were always devoted to the little cripple. Thus did William Elliott strive to repay to the parents the many homely kindnesses that were lavished on him during his long illness.

Dick was sitting on the steps one sunny afternoon, mending his linnets' cage, and singing to himself in a low crooning voice, when a shadow, thrown on the pavement, made him look up, and there was his pretty lady smiling at him.

"Good-evening, Dick."

The boy's eyes sparkled. "Oh, Miss Elliott, what a start you did give me! Mother does not expect you, does she?"

"Neither mother nor any one. Hush, Dick, don't make a noise. I want to surprise my brother; is he in there?"

Dick nodded. "Just come in from the schools. My!

won't he be pleased!" And, in a rapture of ecstasy, Dick took out his accordion and played softly, "Oh, Willie, we have missed you," and finished with "God save the Queen."

Meanwhile, Dym had gone in from the sunshine to the dark narrow passage inside; she stood outside the half-closed door listening for a moment, as though she lacked courage to enter, but she pushed it open more boldly on hearing a slight well-known cough.

The room was small certainly, but had a cosy, well-used air about it. It was not badly furnished, either. A leather-covered library table, two or three handsomely-carved chairs, relics of college luxury, a well-filled bookcase, a reading-stand and lamp, and a snug-looking couch, all spoke of William Elliott's better days. A stand of flowers, carefully tended, guarded the privacy of the window, and a rough yellow dog lay on the hearth-rug. Mr. Elliott himself sat busily writing at the table, with his back towards the door.

Nip growled a little, and then turned over on his back and groveled when he saw his mistake—he was an abject dog, and he knew it. Dym looked pitifully for a moment at the bowed figure before her, and then stole forward and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Will."

"Halloo!"

Nip ceased groveling, and began barking in earnest at the exclamation and the start that sent all the papers flying. If Mr. Elliott had meant to rise, he could not well have done so, with Dym's two arms round his neck nearly strangling him.

"My dear Dym!"

"My dear, dear old Will Conqueror!"

"Let me get a look at you, girl; you are almost depriving me of breath. There, that is better," taking off his spectacles the better to regard her. "Now, what's the meaning of all this? Has Mrs. Tressilian given you another holiday?"

Dym shook her head.

"What, have you taken French leave, then?"

"Don't ask so many questions; aren't you glad to see me? Oh, Will, it is so delicious to be looking at your dear old face again!"

Mr. Elliott laughed; but he was not quite satisfied. In spite of her pleasure, Dym looked pale and a little worn, and

she did not freely meet her brother's eyes; on the contrary, his close inspection seemed to embarrass her, and she turned away, and laid aside her hat and jacket with an evident desire to gain time. Instinctively Mr. Elliott felt then that things were not right with his young sister.

"Well, you provoking child, when are you going to answer me? There, leave your hair alone; you look as tidy and trim as possible."

"Do I?" answered Dym, absently. "I suppose I must tell you all about it, Will; it is better to get it all over. There, take your old chair, and I will bring up my own foot-stool. Out of the way, Nip, good dog." And, suiting her action to her words, Dym dropped down on her lowly seat, and, crossing her hands on her brother's knee, laid her cheek upon them.

It was not a good beginning, and Mr. Elliott felt sure there was something amiss.

"Come, little one, confess. You are in trouble again."

"Oh, Will, in horrible trouble. I don't know what makes it so hard to tell you to-day, but I can't get it out. You will be so sorry, and I can't help it, but they won't let me stay."

"Dym!"

"There, I knew how shocked you would be." An awful silence.

"I did try, Will, I did indeed; but they said I was young and silly; and Miss Tressilian was disagreeable, and they would not keep me."

Still the same silence.

"Oh, Will, if you take it in this way I don't know what I shall do!" and for once in her life Dym evidently dreaded her brother's reproof. It came at last with a sternness that was almost crushing.

"Child, child, after all my care, all my prayers for you, do you mean to break my heart?"

Dym looked up at him frightened; never had he spoken to her with such solemnity, in such a tone of repressed grief.

"Dym, could you not have saved me from this?"

Dym tried to pluck up spirit to answer, but the effort failed. The reproach had touched her better nature. She dropped her head again on his knee, and murmured, almost inaudibly,—

"You have never been so hard on me before."

"Because you have never so sorely tried me. Come, Dym, you are not a child now; how often are you to come back to me with the same story of miserable failures? Must I remind you again and again that 'he that doth not work, neither must he eat'?"

"Will, I cannot bear it—you are unjust to me."

"Is it unjust to remind you that we are poorer than ever, and that you at least must not starve?"

"Better starve than be trampled on."

"Always the same thing—pride, temper, jealousy. My dear, when are you going to be a woman, and learn to govern yourself?"

Dym made no answer; the large tears were dropping into her lap one by one. Will was unjust to her; he would not believe that she really had tried this time. She had come to him in her trouble for a little comfort, and all this was very bitter to her. Mr. Elliott sighed very deeply once or twice, and then he put his hand on her head and softly stroked her hair.

"Come, my dear, tell me all about it," he said, coaxingly; and Dym dried her eyes and cheered up a little, and told her story by and by in a humble way that thoroughly touched her listener's heart. Dym, woman-like, felt she had made a point—and instantly lost it.

"There, Will, do you think I was so much to blame?" she finished, a little triumphantly.

The answer disappointed her.

"Very much indeed," was the uncompromising rejoinder.

"How so?" she asked, in a crestfallen tone. "Surely you will allow Miss Tressilian was more in fault than I?"

"My dear little sister, as usual you are taking the worst side of the argument. Granted Miss Tressilian was the aggressor, does it never occur to you that people, governesses especially, may sometimes be called upon to endure?"

"But, Will——"

"My dear Dym, I am very sorry for all this—very sorry, because I must tell you, once for all, I am disappointed in you; you seem to have so little stability."

"Now you are going to be unkind again."

"I am going to tell you the truth, certainly. Dym, you

have no idea how all this hurts me: with the best intentions in the world your efforts are so frightfully weak. Child, how ever will you make your way in the world if you do not learn to restrain this jealous temper of yours?"

"Oh, Will, do be more merciful! Every one cannot be as good as you; and you never will believe that I try."

"Yes, I do," he replied, thoughtfully; "no one knows better than I what a noble-hearted girl you are at the bottom. But, Dym darling, I do so long to see the higher nature assert itself; these three wretched failures of yours make me tremble so for the future. What would you do if you had not got me to fall back upon as a last resource?—though I fear I am but a poor protector to you, poor child."

This was too much for Dym's affectionate heart; and she clung round her brother's neck with a vehement "No, no!"

"Ah, but I am," he repeated, in a tone of quiet conviction, blended with sadness. "If I had ever so poor a home to offer you, I should be more than content; but with my health how is that to be achieved?"

"You dear old Conqueror, I will not let you talk so. There, that serves me right for making you so unhappy; if it will make you more comfortable to hear it, I'll own I have been bad in every way—cross, touchy, disagreeable, and altogether horrid."

"Nay," he returned, with a smile, "that is making yourself out too bad. After all, Dym, I am afraid you are not cut out for a governess."

"I am sure of it," was the eager reply. "Oh, if I could only take in plain sewing, and live here with you, I am sure I should be always good!" Then, very coaxingly, "Couldn't it be managed, Will dear? I might give music-lessons, or teach French, or even a place as daily governess might suit me better. Do say you won't send me away again, Will; you don't know half how unhappy I am away from you."

"My dear, a governess in Kentish Town!"

"Why not? It is not worse than being a curate here. Who is proud now, I should like to know?"

"But with all your advantages——"

"I am not half so clever as you, Will."

"The idea of comparing us two—an old crippled hulk as I am. Dym, are you sure I was only eight-and-twenty last

birthday? I feel forty, at least; look how thin my hair is—and turning gray too."

"That comes of those horrible headaches; but when you take those ugly glasses off your eyes you are as nice as ever. I do like your eyes, Will."

"Little flatterer."

"Ah, but you like it all the same; you get so dull living in these little rooms, and having no one to say pretty things to you. You feel better already for having me to scold."

"I have not scolded you half properly, I am afraid."

"It will keep. Suppose you ring the bell instead, and ask Mrs. Maynard to bring us some tea. I am so hungry and thirsty and tired, Will, and you have not made me a bit comfortable. There, I know what you are going to say—it is Mrs. Maynard's washing-day."

"What a memory you have, Dym! Of course it is; but I dare say——" and here the curate looked helplessly round.

"Never mind, Will; sit where you are. I'll have everything ready in a moment." And before Mr. Elliott could look down she had disappeared, and so quick were her movements that before another quarter of an hour had elapsed the brother and sister were established cosily at their frugal meal

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CHAPTER V.

THE GREAT UNKNOWN.

"DYM, do you know the Great Unknown has turned up again?"

"Nonsense, Will!"

Dym sat opposite her brother, with the tea-equipage between them.

The cloth that covered the small library-table was carefully darned and spotless in color; the very teapot, though only of Britannia metal, was evidently burnished by willing hands, and reflected Dym's beaming face in a widening caricature.

It was wonderful how beaming Dym's face could look just

now. Miss Tressilian would hardly have recognized the little pale-faced governess. Dym's olive complexion had warmed into sudden color; her eyes were full of soft brilliance; in her whole appearance there was animation, life, *verve;* under such aspects Dym could look very pretty.

The Parisian education had not been altogether thrown away. Dym could put on a shabby dress and wear it with the grace of a Frenchwoman; in spite of her slender purse, she never looked ill dressed on any occasion. She had all sorts of simple knacks and contrivances; she would redeem plainness with a knot of gay-colored ribbon; she knew how to adjust a bow or a flower coquettishly. This sort of tact is very valuable to a woman; and though Dym had not a speck of vanity in her composition, she was often heard to say "that it was a woman's duty, a plain woman's especially, to make the best of herself."

Mr. Elliott's admiration for his young sister was unbounded —he had regarded her trim figure complacently more than once before he had burst out with an involuntary, "You look very pretty, Dym."

"I am so glad you think so, Will dear," she had answered, quite simply; and then William Elliott had followed up the remark with another rather startling one, "Do you know the Great Unknown has turned up again?"

"Nonsense, Will!"

"It is true, I assure you."

"Do you mean Mr. Latimer has really been here again?"

"Latimer! nonsense; that's not his name."

"It is what he chooses to call himself, I suppose. Will, don't you think it is wrong for people not to call themselves by their proper names?"

"That depends. I believe the motive ought to accuse or excuse in such a case. Of course I think it is a pity; nay, more, a mistake."

"I call it deceit."

"Humph, that sounds harsh—women are always so intolerant. This happens to be pure caprice—a whim; the man is full of whims."

"He does seem to be a most extraordinary person. Did he ever give you his reasons, Will?"

"Well, they were hardly to be called reasons. He told me once that he had taken this singular alias to escape the notice

of a host of gay London friends. 'I don't want to be unearthed just now,' he remarked, 'and to have a great hue and cry after me; cannot you respect my incognito a little longer, Mr. Elliott?' And when I hazarded the observation that I thought his fashionable friends would hardly explore Kentish Town in search of him, he answered, dryly enough, 'Possibly not; but when one has such a staff of moral police—in the shape of one's friends—a man hardly knows when he is safe.' Oh, he is all right, you may depend upon it. Of course I could not press him any further."

Dym shook her head sagely, and pursed up her lips.

"You are infatuated, Will. The Great Unknown has bewitched your better judgment."

"I confess he interests me strongly. A man who can act as he does, and for a whim evidently—oh, there's some stuff in him! After all, one must judge of a man by his actions, and not by his words."

"True."

"This man's actions are most noble. You may shake your head, Dym, but there's something great about Mr. Latimer."

"Who was it who preached to me against the folly of hero-worship? Ah, I have you there, Will."

"Not at all. I suppose a man's honest appreciation is of more value than a school-girl's hysterical admiration. School-girls are so superficial and unsafe in their missish likings and dislikings."

"Will, oughtn't you to be ashamed of yourself? Hysterical, missish—for shame!"

"So they are. Never mind, Dym; I'll forgive you a great deal if you will properly admire Mr. Latimer."

"I am afraid I do a little already," returned Dym, honestly. "Do people fall in love on hearsay, I wonder? How long is it since we first heard of this mysterious individual, Will?"

"Let me see. It must be eighteen months ago—it was just after I had got to St. Luke's. I was beginning my three months' probation, I remember."

"So do I. Eighteen months—what a long time to be faithful to St. Luke's!"

William Elliott's eyes had a far-away look of pleased remembrance. "How well I remember our first meeting—the time and place and all! It was original, to say the least of it;

everything the man said or did was unlike what any one else would have said or done under the circumstances. It was a wet night, and I was preaching at St. Luke's to a very scanty congregation. I even remember the subject of my sermon; for I had lost heart about things, and I seemed to be preaching to myself more than to any one else. It was about 'not being weary in well-doing,' and when I went into the vestry there he was waiting for me."

"To be sure—how odd it all was!" cried Dym. She had heard it before, but her brother's pleasure in the reminiscence charmed her; she would not have interrupted his recital for worlds.

William Elliott rubbed his hands slowly over each other, and went on.

"Yes, there he was lolling against the vestry mantelpiece, and looking like a good-tempered giant; and when he saw me, he came forward and shook hands. I can almost feel his grip now. 'That's a capital sermon of yours, Mr. Elliott,' he said, 'and I want to have a good talk with you about it;' and his manner was just as cordial and pleasant as though we had met yesterday."

"Dear, dear," laughed Dym, "what a very droll person he must be, Will."

"Droll! I should think so. I never saw such a pure piece of originality in my life before. 'Well,' he went on in the same cheery voice, 'what I like so much about it was, that you spoke as a man should who tried to practice what he preached.' Odd, wasn't it."

"I think he must be a very Broad Churchman," observed Dym, solemnly.

Her brother laughed outright.

"Well done, Dym; that's what I call begging an argument. Never mind his particular party; I shouldn't wonder at all if his school were different from ours; but to return to that Friday evening. You know Morris had just sent to me to baptize a dying child, so of course I could not stand talking to him there; but when I explained the urgent cause for my haste, 'I'll go with you,' he returned, briskly, 'one can talk outside as well as inside, and I dare say you will be glad of a strong arm this boisterous night, as you don't appear overstrong.'

"As you may suppose, I was a little confused by his offer of company, but how to refuse it was the question; one thing, it was not far to Preston Street, and I could get rid of him there. But I did not know my man: it was blowing great guns, as they say, outside, and the rain came down, too, at intervals. Before we had got past the church railings I was glad enough of the arm he offered me. We did not do much talking by the way; the wind beat the conversation out of us; but he shouted out a few cheery words now and then, and, as far as I can remember, on subjects far removed from the sermon; I am not quite sure that it was not on art-criticism, or something of the kind.

"Well, when we got to the Morrises I just said a civil good-night, and thanked him; but he returned, 'No occasion,' and came in with me. I recollect that I had some difficulty in persuading him that he need not stand sponsor for the child, as it was evidently dying fast. I believe he had some odd notions on the subject. Strange to say, we were only just in time—the poor little creature almost stiffened in my arms. 'Verily in the bosom of the Church,' he muttered, looking down on the dead baby much as though it were his own; 'poor little white-folded lamb!' And he spoke almost roughly to the poor mother when her tears dropped on the little dead face. 'Shame to let the salt of earth touch anything so pure,' he said.

"Well, hearing him speak so beautifully, and seeing how tender he was over the poor baby—he gave the parents money too, I am sure—it was rather a shock to me to hear him say, when he came out,—

"'I wish we had a nineteenth-century Herod.'

"'Why, in the name of Heaven?' I answered, quite dumfounded at his vehemence.

"'Oh, I have shocked you, have I?' peering down at me in the darkness and shouting still, though the wind had lulled. 'I cannot help it; it is my misfortune to be always shocking some one. You are a clergyman, and you won't like to answer, but wouldn't it be a real deed of mercy to put nine-tenths of the infant population of England out of their misery in the quickest and most painless manner possible?'

"'Drown them like kittens, I suppose you mean?'"

"Oh, Will, you never told me this part before. What a horrible man!"

"He smiled at my literal interpretation, but went on seriously,—

"'Well, but of course the government must do it; we cannot have private murders.'

"'You prefer a wholesale slaughter of the innocents?'

"He nodded.

"'Sounds grimly, doesn't it?—I prefer handling the theory. Look at that babe we left just now, dead with the baptismal chrism still wet on its brow: what would it have been in a few years? Did you see that brute of a father? his hand, when he stretched it out for my bounty, felt like a drunkard's.'

"'Too true, I fear.'

"'Well, which do you prefer, the Union, or Paradise—an Inferno here with a doubtful hereafter, or the spotless rest of that poor baby? How could that child grow up good amidst those surroundings?'

"'Humph! vexed questions.'

"And then we plunged into a deeply interesting conversation which lasted till midnight."

"Just like your imprudence, Will. Of course you took him home?"

"Yes. When he found I would not stand outside, he allowed himself to be persuaded to enter; but I do not recollect that he took a seat, neither did he in the least enlighten me about himself; but of course I saw he was a gentleman and had received a university education."

"I suppose he found out then that you were a Balliol man?"

"Yes, we ran the gauntlet between Balliol and Magdalen. I think it was that that stirred me up so, and made me forget the time."

"And he did not tell you his name?"

"No, not a bit of it. When I opened the door for him and wished him good-night, he just vanished in the darkness, whisking away like a comet or will-o'-the-wisp, or any other erratic substance."

"But you saw him again the next Sunday?"

"To be sure. I got a glimpse of him at the conclusion of my morning's sermon, sitting under the gallery, and I was not surprised when he followed me into the vestry. You recollect, Dym, I told you how interested he was in our schools."

"And that was the commencement of his work at St. Luke's. Really it is very extraordinary, Will."

"Yes, is it not? He worked, off and on, with me I should say six or seven weeks before he vanished for as many months; he was always coming and going when one least expected it."

"But he was a great help to you. I remember your writing to me and telling me a great deal of all this, and what a comfort he was to you in the night-schools."

"Ah, I was new to my work then, and, before he came, the night-schools were my bugbear. I was not so strong as I am now, and my lameness was against me; the boys would play tricks, and I could not always take summary justice. I shall never forget the first evening I took Latimer down to my cub-garden: didn't the cubs get it that night!"

"Served them right, too; those boys behaved shamefully. Mr. Benedict told me all about it."

"My dear, cubs want licking into shape; boys are rather rough in their play sometimes. I think Bill Saunders played his last trick when he blew out those candles."

"And Mr. Latimer relighted them?"

"Yes; how were the poor lambs to know he had a box of matches in his pocket? The sudden light threw them in confusion. How Bill howled for mercy!"

"Did Mr. Latimer thrash him?"

"Yes; and all the ringleaders besides. We have had order in the night-schools since then. Mr. Benedict and I always call them 'Latimer's lambs.' You would not recognize one or two of my cubs now."

"I thought Bill Saunders was improved the last time I saw him."

"That he is; and he bears Mr. Latimer no malice, either. An English lad is rather like a thorough-bred mastiff—never resents a just blow from a master's hand. Bill is always asking when Mr. Latimer is coming up: he is quite civil to me in his absence; and last winter the lad actually saved me from an awkward fall."

"Bravo, Bill! Do you know, Will, I quite long to see this Mr. Latimer and thank him for helping you?"

"Well, you will soon have your opportunity."

"What, is he coming up?"

"He will be at the schools to-night; but moderate your

raptures. Mr. Latimer hates hero-worship as mu[illegible] I do, and thanks are poison to him. Do you know, D[illegible]e is a curious mixture of reserve and frankness? with all his cheerfulness, I have found out one thing."

"That he is not happy?"

"Yes."

"You ought to seek his confidence, Will. What's the good of being a clergyman if you cannot give comfort and advice where it is needed? Why don't you ask him straight out if he has anything on his mind?"

"Because I know that he has."

"Oh, Will!" opening her eyes.

"I don't believe he has a murder on his conscience, or anything of that sort; it is evident to me that the man is only restless and ill at ease; he seems to me sometimes as though he were working against himself."

"But does he never talk about himself?"

"Very seldom, and then only vaguely; he hinted once that he was very rich, and wanted me to pity him for it. 'It is such a bore to have no aim in life,' he said to me; 'I tried to get into Parliament once, only the seat was sharply contested, and I had to give it up. One gets tired of traveling when one is always alone;' and one day he said something about only wishing for one thing, and not being able to get it; but whether it was the seat in Parliament he was talking about, or a woman, or some pet ambition, I have not the slightest idea."

"But, Will, why don't you try to find out?"

"My dear, when you see the Unknown you can answer that question for yourself. Mr. Latimer is not a man one can question; he has his moments of frankness, but they never concern himself. Since that first time we met he has never spoken to me as though I were a clergyman,—never sought advice in any way, I mean; and though I know he respects my cloth, he has very droll ways of showing it. Did you hear how he treated poor Ned Smithers?"

"Was that the boy whom you both nursed in the fever?"

"No, that was another case; this happened quite recently. No, I remember I never told you. Are you tired of the subject, Dym?"

"Tired of what interests you so? Fie, Will!"

"How can one help being interested?" he ejaculated; "such noble devotion and real Christianity hidden away under all that comical roughness. Well, Dym, I am quite sure the story is worth hearing. You know Brent's Buildings?"

"That queer little street turning out of Weedington Road?"

"Yes, a wretchedly poor neighborhood. Well, we heard from young Shaw at the night-schools that Ned Smithers had met with an accident, and was likely to do badly; and Latimer said, as usual, he would go with me, and, if necessary, act as my almoner. Well, we went along as usual arm-in-arm—the giant and the dwarf, as some street wags once called us; and when we got to Brent's Buildings we found a very dismal state of things, and that it was all up with poor Ned."

"Do you mean that he was dying?"

"Dying; ah, but what a death! I won't harrow up your feelings, Dym, more than I can help. Poor Ned was always a drunkard and blasphemer; but the cursed drink was not the actual cause of his death. Those navvies run terrible risks. An embankment on the line of railway they were constructing gave way; two men were killed on the spot. Ned's injuries were no less mortal, but mortification had not yet put a stop to his agonies. I know what pain is, Dym, and how it taxes all a man's fortitude and Christianity to bear it; it makes me shudder even now to think of Ned writhing on his miserable couch, and poisoning the fetid air with his curses."

"Oh, Will, please don't tell me any more."

"The picture will be less gloomy by and by. How these people manage to exist is the wonder; navvies get good wages, but I suppose Ned had drunk his, for such abject poverty I had never seen before in my life; the brawny giant himself was lying on a heap of straw, with only an old blanket over him—fancy that, and a damp brick floor and no fire, on a cold winter's night. But, worse than that, there was his poor wife, only just recovered from her confinement, with miserable-looking twins in her arms: I never saw such a pitiable sight as that mother and her babies. 'Two of them, and smothering would be regarded as a sin,' I heard Latimer mutter to himself. I frowned at him, but he took no notice; he had propped himself up against the place where the mantelpiece ought to be, and stood frowning at them all the time I was

reading and praying beside poor Ned, with the damp from the floor creeping into my bones."

"Oh, Will! and with your rheumatism too."

"I think that is what made him interrupt us; for when I rose from my knees, there he was standing beside me. 'Hadn't you better leave off,' he said, in that dry way of his; 'he hasn't been listening to a word—have you, Ned?"

"The man muttered something in answer; it sounded like 'parson be blowed.'

"'There!' he exclaimed, turning on me triumphantly; 'I thought so; that's all you get for catching your death on those horrible flags.'

"'My dear Latimer,' I remonstrated, gently, 'you must allow me to do what I consider to be my duty.'

"'Nonsense!' he returned; 'I never could tolerate a suicide; you had better leave Ned to me: I can manage him better.'

"I will not deny I was a little hurt.

"'My dear sir, this is not a layman's function.'

"'Pooh! nonsense! don't get hot about it; it is only a question whether there shall be two dying men or one. Ned, haven't you had enough of the parson just now?'

"'Curse you! what do I want with either of you?' returned the man, savagely. 'Can't a man die without having a couple of gents standing and staring and praying over him till his flesh creeps on his bones? Who wants your prayers? I'll die as I like.' And here he stretched out his huge fist and shook it at us—it might have felled an ox easily—and broke into language too horrible to relate.

"The blasphemy sickened me—I put my hands over my ears to escape it. The poor wife crept up to him timidly. 'Oh, Ned, my man, hush thee; thee art frightening parson,' she cried.

"Latimer coolly took the man's fist in his, and examined it reflectively.

"'These are the thews and sinews of England they talk about. Ned, don't trouble yourself; I am not going to waste a single prayer on you, or the parson, either; tell me, my man, how often have you turned this hand of yours against that poor wife?'

"'Sal knows,' sneered the man, with a demoniacal laugh.

'Tell the gentlemen, Sal; served her right—a whining, white-faced——'

"Mr. Latimer quietly laid the fist down, and then deliberately shook his own in the savage's face.

"'You cowardly ruffian, if you were not a mass of broken bones I'd have it out with you. Look at that face—a young one, too. God in heaven! to see a woman's face look like that, with all the comeliness bruised out of it.' And so righteous was his indignation that the man actually cowered beneath his vehemence. Again the wife, womanlike, interfered.

"'Don't 'ee, sir, don't 'ee bully my master,' cried the poor creature, quite terrified and trembling, and pressing one of her babies more closely to her.

"'You go and sit down,' said Latimer, not unkindly; 'women always make things worse with their meddling; I never bully any one but a coward. Ned, my man, we've had it out, and my feelings are a little relieved; I can't be hard on such a poor brute as you—a dying brute, too. Shake hands, and keep a civil tongue in your head. Now, I dare say you have had enough talk, and would like a good fire and something warm to drink. I am going out with the parson to cater for you. We'll make Sal and you more comfortable before we've done with you.'

"Would you believe it, Dym, there were actually tears in the poor fellow's eyes?

"'That's what I call a gentleman,' he muttered; and without another word Latimer took my arm and hurried me from the room.

"Outside, I attempted to remonstrate with him.

"'My dear Latimer, I dare say your way will answer best in the end; but to interfere between a priest and one of his flock——'

"'Go on,' he returned, good-temperedly; 'words won't break bones, and I've got you out of that damp vault alive. Faugh! how sweet the air is after it! twilight, too. Do you ever study astronomy, Elliott? I have a theory.' And then and there he propounded it, inveigling me so artfully in an argument that I never saw his drift till I found myself at my own door.

"'Good-night, Mr. Elliott; take my advice—have a good

roaring fire and a strong dose of spirits-and-water, and then get quickly into bed.'

"'May I ask what you are going to do, Mr. Latimer?'

"'I! oh, I am going to cater presently, and then go back to Ned.'

"'So am I.'

"'Are you? There are locks and doors even in Brent's Buildings. Nay, Elliott, I am serious; this night's work is no joking matter to either of us. My dear fellow, though I am only a layman, I am stronger than you. Just take my advice for once; leave Ned this one night to me, and come first thing in the morning;' and, Dym, will you credit the fact? I was weak enough to obey him."

"Oh, Will, I could almost love him for this: don't you see he knew it would be your death, and he just went on in that rough way to get you out of the place?"

Mr. Elliott smiled. "I told you you would find my story interesting. Well, I felt pretty bad by that time, and was glad enough to follow his prescription. As it was, I had a terrible night of pain, and was only just able to hobble down to Brent's Buildings in the morning; the sun cheered me up a little, though. When I got to the place, there was Latimer lolling against the railings and smoking a cigar, as though Brent's Buildings was the choicest neighborhood and he rather liked it than otherwise.

"'What sort of a night have you had? how is Ned?' I asked.

"'Bad, very bad—making for the other side rapidly, I am afraid; in other respects things are more satisfactory.'

"'How so?'

"'I don't think I have heard more than two dozen oaths, and he always apologizes for them afterwards—life habits, you see; we must not be too hard on him. But come in; I must not keep you standing in this cold wind.'

"He had said so little that I was not prepared for the changed aspect of things. Mr. Latimer and his coadjutors had done wonders. Ned could not be moved, it is true—those mangled limbs must remain as they were to the last; but there was plenty of clean warm covering over him, and a bright fire burned in the grate. The poor wife sat beside it in a comfortable chair propped up with pillows, with one

twin in her lap; the other, alas, lay in a white wrapper on a shelf.

"'Yes, it is gone,' whispered Mr. Latimer, noticing my look. 'The poor little thing had convulsions in the night, and before I could fetch a doctor it was gone; pity the other does not follow. That's the fourth child she has lost.'

"I said a few soothing words to the mother, who was fondling her remaining baby, dry-eyed. I suppose constant misery dries up the fount of tears; and when I turned to Ned's bedside I was surprised to find he greeted me with considerable less roughness.

"'He's ready for the parson now, you see,' said Latimer, who still followed me; 'he's had some of the doctor's good stuff, and is rather more free from pain. He can listen to you now; can't you, Ned?'

"'Yes, if parson pleases. You bean't a-going, sir?' looking at him wistfully.

"'Not for long. I'll be back by and by; by the time you want me.'

"'Thank you, sir.'

"'And, Ned, my man, you'll keep your word, and make a clean breast to the parson?'

"'Yes, sir; yes.'

"'This poor fellow,' putting his hand on his shoulder, and pressing it lightly, 'tells me that he has been a great sinner; he almost murdered a man once; didn't you, Ned?'

"'Yes, one of my mates; they locked me up for it, though.'

"'And he says that he has been a bad husband to Sal; pretty nearly starved her and her children. And he wants to know, Mr. Elliott—you being a clergyman and understanding such things—whether he has any cause to hope that he will ever see his little boy again. It seems, since his boy's death he has taken to drinking.'

"'Ay, to drown thought. He were sich a pretty little chap, were Charlie; and he minded me rarely. "Where's daddie?" he used to call out, as soon as ever he could speak. You mind it, Sal.' And the man wiped away a tear furtively with his sleeve.

"'And he wants to know if he shall ever see Charlie again. Now, Mr. Elliott, your work is cut out for you;' and then this singular being did consent to leave us alone together."

"And did he die, Will?"

"Yes; but not for a good many days after that. It was very up-hill work with him; but, thank God, he made an edifying end. Not that he ever said much to me; but he seemed grateful, and liked to hear me read and pray by him; just a few words at the last made me feel the man was really a penitent.

"'You gentle'em,' he said, speaking with difficulty, for the end was drawing near,—'you gentle'em will walk head erect into heaven. If the good Lord will only let me creep in just at the last I'd be more than content.'

"'On your hands and knees,' quoth Latimer. 'Well put, my man.'

"'And, Sal, my lass, you must mind what parson sees, and try for to come in afterwards. I've not been a good master to you, my woman, but it is too late to say naught about that now; maybe you'll get a better master nor I, when I'm cold.'

"'Nay, Ned. I never went fur to think of such a thing,' cried the poor thing, panting and sobbing; 'but for the drink we might have been so comfortable like.'

"'Ah,' murmured the dying man, 'thou art about right, Sal. Don't let Charlie drink; it is a pity to let a little chap like that get into mischief. Charlie, lad, you are tired, maybe; let dad carry you,' he muttered on, drowsily. When it came to the last, he would keep his face to Mr. Latimer, and once made a groping on the bedclothes, as though for his hand.

"'I'm a-creeping in, sir,' he said, once, with a sudden brightening; those were his last words. My dear child,"—for Dym was crying softly to herself,—"I ought not to have saddened you like this, and on your first evening too."

"Oh, but, Will, it is so beautiful; no wonder you say Mr. Latimer has something great about him."

"Yes; but you must not raise your expectations too high, or you might be disappointed when you see him. Well, what is it, Dick?"

"Mr. Latimer, sir."

"Here? Oh, what shall I do?" cried Dym, excitedly, trying to clear away the traces of her tears.

"Don't be frightened, miss; Mr. Latimer ain't a-coming in. He left word for you, sir, that as you had a lady with you he

would not interrupt you, but that you would see him at the schools."

"Dear me, I never knew him to do that before," returned Mr. Elliott, looking puzzled; then, as the boy closed the door, "It must be because you are with me, Dym; and yet he is the last man to be shy of a lady. What an enigma he is, to be sure! Well," in a tone of regret, "I must be off now. Perhaps he will come in with me by and by; anyhow, I am sorry you are disappointed."

"Disappointed! not at all," returned Dym, contradictorily. "There, run off, Will, you will be late." And when she had watched her brother out, Dym sat down and thought of Mr. Latimer for the rest of the evening.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RIGHTS AND WRONGS OF WOMEN.

CONTRARY to Dym's expectations, Mr. Latimer did not make his appearance in Paradise Row that evening, nor on many succeeding evenings; he had always some excuse ready when William Elliott pressed him to accompany him home on the nights when they were at work together at the schools. Dym, who at first looked for him with some eagerness, at last relinquished her watch in despair.

When life is monotonous, trifles appear of magnitude. In the confined landscape of Paradise Row, Mr. Latimer's figure loomed gigantic in the foreground. Dym, out of natural contradiction, longed to brush it out; womanlike, she revolted against the vagueness and mystery; she wanted the dim outline to gain form and coloring. But soon her thoughts were directed into another channel.

William Elliott had acceded, with evident reluctance, to Dym's plan of seeking employment as daily governess; but, though her efforts were most persevering, they had not as yet met with success.

Either education was at a low ebb or governesses were at a

discount in Kentish Town. Dym tried Haverstock Hill and even Hampstead, but the market seemed overstocked. A great commercial panic had taken place in the City a few months previously, and scores of girls, younger and less well-educated than Dym, had been thrown on their own resources: girls luxuriously brought up, and taught everything but to govern themselves and teach others, were driven from the fastnesses of happy homes and launched suddenly upon the world. Incompetence seeking competence; youth and helplessness going hand-in-hand to find a stewardship, where they could starve themselves and bring others to beggary.

And the beggary of the heart and mind—what more pitiable than that!

Dym's neat little figure traversed miles of pavement in answer to countless advertisements, but she never found anything to suit; her youth was against her. Sometimes people told her to her face that she was not good-tempered; at such moments Dym could not always repress her impatience and disappointment. "This situation would quite suit me," she said, once, when she was weary of doors closing against her—"only two little girls; I will not quarrel about the terms."

"Pardon me, but you will not suit me, Miss Elliott," returned the lady, coldly. "You are too brusque and decided for such a young person; let me tell you, for your future guidance, that mothers like to have the management of their own children; you have set aside my remarks once or twice already."

"I have not always given satisfaction, but I have good references," faltered Dym, more humbly.

"I do not doubt it; forgive me if I pain you, but you do not look old enough, nor yet sufficiently staid, for me to intrust my girls to your care."

Very much the same thing was repeated at the next house, where Dym found herself in the presence of a very strong-minded woman, evidently one of those original characters who combine domesticity with plenty of public speaking.

Dym found out, years afterwards, that this lady was a member of the school-board, that she spoke on public platforms, and was conspicuous for her advocacy of the rights of women. On the present occasion she very soon inspired our little heroine with a painful degree of awe.

"Well, why have you come to me?" began the strong-minded matron, in a loud manly voice. Afterwards, Dym thought the voice not an unpleasant one. "Seeking a governess's situation, are you? Absurd! you are too young. What do you say—you can't help your age? No, but you can speak louder while you are about it. Tut! go home to your mother, child; we have too many incompetent young persons in the present day applying to us as governesses—a pack of useless rubbish; it cannot be every girl's vocation to teach—whether they are qualified for it or no; we ought to subject the thing to competitive examination. Why shouldn't women take their degree, I should like to know?" for this was in the days before the Cambridge examination for women.

"I am not quite incompetent," interrupted Dym, in a frightened voice; "I know French and German—I can talk French almost as well as English—and if the children be young——"

"Who said the children were young? One is not bound to state their ages in an advertisement; my eldest girl looks almost as old as you, only of course she has masters. French and German—trash! The question is, are you up in algebra and mathematics generally; have you any idea of geology; do you know what a stratum means; or in architecture could you give me the history of the several transition periods; do you know more than the fancy work of botany—in a word, could you administer education in any other than homœopathic quantities? There, go home to your mother, girl!"

"I have no mother," returned Dym, vainly trying to repress her tears. "Of course I could not teach your daughters all those things; I thought, perhaps you had younger children, or——"

"My youngest is over twelve," replied the matron, a little less grimly; "she is working hard at classics with a tutor now. Why shouldn't women teach classics, I should like to know? I hate men about a house—clergymen especially. Got no mother, you say, child—'bleating about the world like an unfolded lamb,' as Elizabeth Barrett Browning has it. What is it she says? and

> 'Felt a mother-want about the world,
> And still went seeking, like a bleating lamb
> Left out at night in shutting up the fold.'

Sad, sad!" And the strong-minded lady actually sighed. "Jane;" she continued, ringing loudly, "bring this young lady some wine and cake; she has had a long walk and is tired." And after that touch of motherly kindness, Dym did not find her voice loud.

She warmed up into something like confidence over the cake and wine, and her attempt was met by good nature.

"Of course you must work, child: every one must. Why are we sent into the world, except to do our part thoroughly? Why, I work myself," waving a large benevolent-looking hand with plenty of rings on it, and pointing to the massive handsome furniture. "I suppose people would consider me very rich—I don't know; I leave all that to Mr. Garnet. I only know I work as hard as any charwoman from morning to night. Why, I have a ladies' committee on for this very afternoon."

"Don't let me detain you," said Dym, timidly.

"I shouldn't let any one—not the Prime Minister himself—detain me. I am not to be detained. By and by, when the world is a little more educated to the notion, why shouldn't a woman be Prime Minister?" And Dym, tickled by the sudden transition, and the absurdity of the idea, actually burst out laughing; she looked a little foolish, though, when Mrs. Garnet stopped and asked why.

"Why? Oh, because—because the very idea seems so strange."

"All new ideas are strange. Who was the first queen on record? Dido, or Candace, or—come, being a governess you ought to know; I have a better memory for statistics. Well, whoever she was—black, brown, or white—did not the Conservative party in her generation, think you, consider a woman on the throne a very shocking idea?"

This was beyond our small governess, so she only remarked, "I dare say."

"A safe answer. You know how to trim your sails, Miss Elliott. Well, why would it be worse having a woman for a Prime Minister than for a queen to be on the throne?"

"She couldn't do all the work," suggested Dym, with a very vague idea of what Prime Ministers had to do.

"That remains to be proved. Of course it would not be in my time, or in yours either; we have to educate our men, and our women too, up to it; women must vote and sit in Parlia-

ment before that comes to pass—ah, one must not look too far forward. I have a theory, only I haven't time to work it out, that perfection will only precede dissolution—that, in short, the world is gradually wearing itself out. What do you want, Camellia?" to a pale, fashionable-looking young lady who entered the drawing-room at this juncture, and who had evidently been reared at a forcing temperature.

"I did not know you were engaged, mother; only Madame Bousanquet has sent home your bonnet with ostrich instead of marabout feathers."

"Dear, dear, and I wanted it for this very afternoon; how very trying, Camellia! It is impossible I can appear on the platform in my old blue one."

"Quite impossible. Lady Vaughan would think it a slight to her party." And seeing that this trifling incident was really troubling the minds of both mother and daughter—in spite of the speedy dissolution of things material—Dym took a hasty leave of her kind-hearted entertainer.

She returned thoroughly disheartened by this afternoon's work, and almost with a despairing resolve to give up teaching altogether and take in plain sewing,—"that is, if Will will let me," thought the poor girl, dragging her feet wearily over the threshold. But she was too used to disappointment by this time to make any special complaint. She just put her head in the door and said, in a voice that feigned cheerfulness and belied her face,—

"It is *nil desperandum*, Will, to the end of the chapter."

"Well said; a brave remark, and, womanlike too, accompanied by a sigh. Suppose you follow your observation into the room, Miss Elliott."

The voice was not Will's. Dym's heart began to beat more quickly. Could it be the Unknown at last? What a ridiculous way to announce herself! Strange to say, the voice sounded somewhat familiar to her; she advanced into the room feeling very foolish, and confronted—Mr. Chichester.

"Why, it—it is you!" she exclaimed, breathless with astonishment.

"Yes, it is I, quite true; do you often indulge in such clever remarks, Miss Elliott? I beg your pardon. I was under the idea you were going to shake hands, but you are too much occupied in questioning my identity. By the beard of

my father," stroking his placidly, "have you forgotten me already?"

"No; oh, how rude I must seem! But I can't help being surprised to see you sitting there, when I only expected to see Will."

"Was your proverbial philosophy intended for Will, then?"

"Of course it was; and then to find you here, Mr. Chichester!"

"Oh, I told you it would be *au revoir*. Really, Miss Elliott, I am the humblest fellow breathing, but I could almost believe you were glad to see me."

"So I am—very glad indeed," repeated Dym, with the simple honesty of a child; and Mr. Chichester looked pleased. "How long have you been here—have you seen my brother—and where is he? Did you really find your way to Kentish Town from Lansdowne House?"

Mr. Chichester held up his hands appealingly.

"One question at a time; what, all those to answer! Supposing we each take a seat, Miss Elliott," suiting the action to his word, and resuming Will's favorite lounging chair. "There, I know exactly why you have chosen that seat, back to the light—you want me not to see that Kentish Town air has not agreed with you."

"It agrees with me perfectly," argued Dym, stoutly.

"Pardon me, you are too *pâle et triste*, as Mrs. Vivian says. What a female she is! Are some women created in a bandbox? Mrs. Vivian always looks as though she has just stepped out of one. Please do not mention her name if you wish to keep me in a good temper, Miss Elliott."

"How does Edith get on with her?" asked Dym, passing over the fact magnanimously that Mr. Chichester, and not she, had first mentioned that lady's name; and why did he call her triste and pale, when she was sure she was neither?

"Well, she does not get on at all; it is breaking a butterfly on the wheel to put my little pet under the domination of such a woman. After all, Miss Elliott, Edith's guardian was obliged to interfere—officially, I mean. Mrs. Vivian will not trouble Lansdowne House long."

"And you have really dismissed her?"

Dym said no more, but inwardly she felt a little hurt. If Mr. Chichester were really Edith's guardian, and had been in-

vested with full control over the child, why had he not exerted his authority to keep the governess whom Edith loved? Had he not very plainly testified to his cousin's injustice in sending her away without due cause? But why had he not prevented it? Surely, surely it must be because he himself had thought her unfit for her post.

"Please let me have the benefit, Miss Elliott. I have a troublesome knack of reading people's thoughts."

Dym started and colored, and then, becoming more conscious that Mr. Chichester's grave, quizzical eyes were reading her truly, became so exceedingly hot that even he had compassion on her.

"Never mind, if you did harbor such a thought; it was a perfectly natural one, though somewhat difficult to answer. I am rather a contradictory character, Miss Elliott; I have scruples of conscience, as other people have, and one of these scruples concerned you."

"Me!"

Dym was too shame-faced and crestfallen to say more. Had a fresh monitor arisen to rebuke her thoughtlessness in the person of Guy Chichester?

"Ungrateful, wasn't it, after your kindly ministrations too? When I have another headache, I think I must send for you. You have taken care, you see, that you shall never be forgotten in one capacity. Why not take to sick-nursing, Miss Elliott, and abandon teaching?"

"I can guess what you think of me, by that one speech;" in a tone more humble than Dym generally used. People could be humble before Guy Chichester without feeling themselves humiliated; it is so that real superiority asserts itself.

"How can you tell what I think of you? I am far too young a man—please to recollect I am not thirty-five yet—to render it perfectly safe to act as Mentor to any young ladies."

"Neither do I desire to be your Telemachus," returned Dym, somewhat audaciously, exasperated by this covert rebuke.

"Exactly so. Perhaps I may say I do like your thorough honesty; it is a quality so unique in these present times. Do you know, Miss Elliott, I have come to the conclusion, from the little I have seen of you, that we are both unlike any one else in the world."

"You are, Mr. Chichester;" the tone scarcely modified yet.

"I suppose you did not mean to be personal, but those two

monosyllables were very expressive; and then is it not strange that we both labor under the same misfortune?"

His manner was so entirely changed, so solemn even, that Dym looked up.

"What is that, Mr. Chichester?"

"We both have—will my plain speaking offend you, I wonder?"

"No, oh, no."

"A bad temper."

What a pleasant hearing for Dym! She sat absolutely dumb. In another moment Mr. Chichester was standing before her, holding out his hand.

"Please forgive me."

"For what?" returned Dym, stiffly, but making up her mind, nevertheless, that she would never forgive him; that she hated—yes, she hated him!

"Oh, I am so sorry. Why did you provoke me to it by your honesty? You are so unconventional that I thought you would not mind unconventionality in return. What a fool I have been, and what a mistake I have made!"

"Not at all; but you have departed very quickly from your resolution."

"An enigma. Unriddle the Sphinx, please."

"Not to say what you think of me," returned Dym, biting her lip.

"Well retorted. But Mentor did not claim the same faults as Telemachus. I put myself in the same category, Miss Elliott, as your fellow-sinner; please remember that. Well, Guy Chichester, this is a lesson to you, my good fellow, not to be such a fool again as to believe any woman, at any age, can bear to hear the truth."

"You are making things worse, instead of better, Mr. Chichester, to be told now that I cannot bear the truth;" in a lamentable voice of injured innocence.

Mr. Chichester rubbed his hands with a comical gesture of despair. If only Dym could feel he was not enjoying himself at her expense!

"There, again, I'm done for—head and heels over into the Slough of Despond, and not a hand even to help me out. Miss Elliott, in most cases something under a duel—say, an apology—is supposed to make full amends. Come, Miss

Elliott, be generous; I do so hate giving a fellow-creature pain." And there was such a winning look of bonhomie in Guy Chichester's eyes, that Dym's brief hatred died away, and her pride with it.

"There, then, I forgive you: will that do?"

"Shake hands, then, like men and brothers—sisters—what do I mean?" And thereupon a very healing laugh broke from Dym's lips.

"That's right; I thought you had forgotten how to laugh in Kentish Town. Do you recollect what fun we used to have in Edith's sick-room?"

"You and Edith, you mean."

"True; you held yourself somewhat aloof from our frivolity. Nevertheless, I have often heard suppressed sounds from your corner. Do you recollect my story of 'The House of Cards?'"

"Wait a moment, Mr. Chichester; please don't go on just yet. I want to tell you something."

"What?"

"That you were right about my temper."

"Halloo! Honesty without her mask again."

"I was only a little put out that you should notice it so soon. I am rather sore on this subject, Mr. Chichester; my temper is my bane."

"Get rid of it, then."

"Good advice; but how to follow it?"

"Throw it off as Sindbad did the Old Man of the Sea. How old are you, Miss Elliott? Another plain question."

"Eighteen."

"Age of innocence! eighteen *versus* three-and-thirty. My dear Miss Elliott, you will never make me believe your Old Man of the Sea is as formidable or sticks half so hard as mine."

Dym leant her chin on her hand and regarded him fixedly.

"Wherefore that inquisitorial glance?"

"You really have a bad temper, Mr. Chichester?"

"I advise you not to ask."

"Why?"

"My answer might frighten you."

"I thought so," in a cheerful tone; "but," hesitating, "I suppose people like you in spite of it."

"My mother does."

"Oh, mothers always do; but other people who know you well, are they afraid of you?"

"They would be if they saw me in one of my bad moods. But come, come; I am not going to put myself in the pillory, as an example and warning to naughty girls and boys. I am a terrible fellow when you come to know me, Miss Elliott; but I suppose I have my good points. I must have," suddenly changing his voice, and sighing. "My dear Miss Elliott, you and I have been running a tilt, half in jest and half in earnest, *pour passer le temps.* It is pleasant pastime, but there's many a true word spoken in jest. I was a little impertinent to you just now."

"No, pray do not say so."

"Truth will out, you see. I told you I had scruples of conscience about retaining you as Edith's governess, when a word from me would have turned the scale. If I did not speak that word, it was not because I believed all my cousin's accusation. From the first, I felt her to be manifestly unjust, and I preferred to judge for myself."

"And your verdict was against me?"

"Not altogether," with a merry twinkle of the eye, "only I felt you were unfit for your position. Edith, it is true, had not suffered from your caprice; but she might. There was affection between you, but, pardon me, Miss Elliott, no wise guiding."

"I tried my best," very softly.

"No one could know you even a little and not see that; but take the word of a spoilt child of Fortune, who knows better how to preach than to practice—don't waste your life in making vain efforts. Strike out new paths for yourself; rise above mere conventionality; be true to your own nature. You have not patience or temper, or the mellowed wisdom of experience to fit you for a guide of youth; you want to be in leading-strings yourself yet; you will not do for a governess, but you will make a capital sick-nurse."

Dym shuddered.

"You do not like my suggestion."

"To be in a sick-room all one's life—no, oh, no!"

"You want something gayer and more varied. You surprise me. I should have held it to be woman's noblest vocation."

"That is what Will always says," shrugging her shoulders.

"Sensible Will; but what is the good of talking sense to unwilling ears? Miss Elliott, I told you before that I was very anxious to repair my cousin's injustice, and to help you by any means within my power; the question is, how?"

"True." Dym uttered the word slowly. "Then you don't think I shall ever do well as a governess?"

"It is not your vocation."

"Vocation! I hate the word; it seems to bind one down so. Do you think I might go out as a companion, Mr. Chichester?"

"The very thing. I wonder your friends have not thought of it before. A good thought, Miss Elliott. Ah, did you see that shadow across the window? I believe it must be your brother."

Dym sprang up and opened the door.

"What, Dym, only just come back?"

"There, I've had my hat on all this time, and never knew it. Oh, Will, how late you are, and just when I wanted you so!"

"Wanted me? Why, what is the matter? What a color you've got, Dym! Why, Latimer, you don't mean to say you've honored us at last?"

"Better late than never: your sister has been entertaining me for the last hour. Miss Elliott, without being personal—a thing I detest—may I remark you are opening your eyes rather widely?"

"Oh, Will—the Unknown! Why this—this is my Mr. Chichester, the one I spoke to you about—Edith's guardian, I mean," finished Dym, feeling she was explaining herself very badly.

"Guy Latimer Chichester at your service," remarked that individual, coolly, taking no notice of Dym's unfortunate possessive pronoun. "There, murder will out, Elliott; your sister has betrayed me, and now is your mind relieved?"

"Very much so," replied William Elliott, frankly. "I hate fictitious sobriquets—everything fair and open for me. If I had known Latimer was really your baptismal name, it would not have stuck so often in my throat; anyhow, I am thankful you are not an earl's son in disguise; simple Guy Chichester, I suppose?"

"I sometimes take an esquire at the end," responded Mr.

Chichester, dryly. "What a family yours is for honesty! your sister there is like a pane of glass."

Dym laughed and ran out of the room, on hospitable thoughts intent. Mr. Chichester, her unknown hero, the wonderful Mr. Latimer; it was too strange, too delightful altogether; and she had been nearly quarreling with him, too, when all the time he had been Will's friend, who had helped him so. Dym felt she could never be sufficiently contrite.

When she had finished her little preparations—not forgetting to don her smartest ribbons in honor of the occasion—Dym went back to the sitting-room and marched up straight to Mr. Chichester.

"I have been thinking it all over, and I have so often wanted to thank you."

"To thank me, for what? I will thank you, presently, when you have given me some tea."

"I thought you were getting it ready, Dym."

"So I was; it will be here directly, Will; don't be impatient. But, Mr. Chichester, I cannot be happy till I have thanked you for all you have done for Will and St. Luke's. For what are you looking?" for Mr. Chichester, red in the face, was groping mysteriously under his chair.

"For my hat; I think I have mislaid it."

"Here it is; take it away, Dym; hide it somewhere. You foolish girl, didn't I tell you Mr. Latimer hated gratitude?"

"Was it that that was driving him away? Sit down, Mr. Chichester; you shall have your tea directly." And with much tact Dym bustled about, and, aided by her brother, soon produced a creditable enough looking meal, during the course of which Mr. Chichester gradually recovered his equanimity.

What a pleasant evening that was! the pleasantest, Dym thought, that she had ever spent. And before the end of it she had achieved one success—Mr. Chichester pronounced her a good listener. High praise from a clever man.

As a general rule, men prefer responsive to suggestive powers in a woman. A woman whose intellect is ambitious enough to emulate the other sex is rarely a favorite with either. The bright intelligence that can appreciate without deterioration,—that can, if occasion require, sum up into brief review the salient points of an argument or a thing discussed,

—that can even weigh and judge its merits without obtruding contradiction and opinionativeness,—this is justly prized by men; and a listener, be she an intelligent one, is worth half a score of clever talkers.

Dym could talk cleverly sometimes, but she loved better to listen, and especially to such men as Will and Guy Chichester, both men of no mean order of intellect. Mr. Chichester combined rare eloquence with much native shrewdness; his mode of speech was always abrupt, but now and then it would be startling; his discourse, when on most solemn subjects, would be varied by lightning-like flashes of metaphor or humor. Will was a more even speaker.

Both men talked well.

Guy Chichester was the more daring in his speculations; William Elliott felt more.

Dym, sitting by in unconscious criticism, thought Guy Chichester was far the grandest talker she had ever heard in her life; but Will's words came home nearest to her heart.

The priest prevailed over the layman; not by virtue of his office, truth compelling me to avow that Guy Chichester was a Broad Churchman, but simply because the priest had lived out his own convictions, not taught them simply.

And this was the secret of the strange bond that already bound these two men together—mutual respect on the one side developing into reverence, on the other into hero-worship, not unmixed with pity, for William Elliott had already discovered that Guy Chichester was his own enemy.

CHAPTER VII.

A GLIMPSE INTO THE HAPPY VALLEY

Dym had sufficient leisure to think over her pleasant evening, for Mr. Chichester never came near them for a whole week after this—nay, more, he was missing at the school.

Dym marveled greatly over this sudden disappearance, but her brother took the matter more coolly. "You don't suppose we keep this sort of *rara avis* permanently at St. Luke's," he

said. "Very likely he has gone back to his own people, and forgotten all about us, till the next ill wind blows him southward again"—a random shot which on this occasion was tolerably wide of the mark; but Dym shook her head, and would not be convinced.

"He would have said good-by to us if he were not coming back," she persisted; and she looked up every time Will came in from his evening work, with the hope that Mr. Chichester was with him.

And, as usual, he appeared when she least expected him.

It was a very wet Sunday evening; there had been a ceaseless down-pour most of the afternoon, and only a small congregation, chiefly women and boys, had collected in the evening, in the hope of hearing the strange preacher, Mr. Ainslie: had Mr. Elliott preached, even that scanty aggregate would have been diminished by at least one-third, for the parish of St. Luke's was not the most God-fearing and church-going parish in Kentish Town. Dym was standing up in a great square pew under the west window, singing at the top of her clear young voice, and watching the rain-drops patter against the glass. When the organ ceased, she almost fancied she could hear its rippling groans, and the soughing of the light summer wind in its branches; the heavy drops splashed outside. "Brief life is here our portion, brief sorrow, short-lived care—" sang Dym. A hand from behind her came abruptly on her book, with an admonitory finger of caution—she was singing the wrong verse.

Dym's sweet contralto broke down altogether then. The old blind man at her side went quavering on, "The life that knows no ending;" a magnificent bass voice caught up the refrain, and carried it on. Dym had never heard the voice, but she knew the great brown hand, with the Oriental signet on the little finger. The sudden reproof abashed her; she did not get cool all the rest of the service.

She took the blind man out carefully, and found her unconscious tormentor waiting for her in the porch.

"Well, shall we go on, or shall we wait for your brother?" he demanded, unfurling a formidable-looking umbrella, after a glance of disdain at Dym's neat little gingham one. "Don't trouble yourself to open that; it will do for Edith's doll."

"I always wait for Will. Good-evening, Mr. Chichester,"

with a dignified little inclination of the head, which said, plainly, "We have not met before to-day, I believe."

"Oh, good-evening, Miss Elliott," lifting his hat, and making a profound salaam, which at once made Dym feel her observation was superfluous. "What creatures of habit we are—are we not? In strict accordance with the truth you ought to have said, 'A bad evening, Mr. Chichester;' but perhaps you only meant a more ceremonious way of saying, 'How do you do?'"

Dym was glad that she had to bow to a chance acquaintance who was passing: it saved her the trouble of replying. When she looked round, Mr. Chichester had closed his umbrella again, and was thoughtfully engaged in probing the probable thickness of the flags. Dym, who felt every one was criticising her tall distinguished-looking companion, drew back further into the porch.

"Don't let me detain you," she whispered, nervously. Mr. Chichester was evidently in one of his unapproachable moods to-night, and Dym was a little afraid of her *tête-à-tête*.

"Our ways lie together," he replied. "How light it is still out here, in spite of the rain! The old Puritan who constructed that consecrated barn," nodding his head slightly towards the red-baize door, "has spoiled his best windows by that hideous gallery. No wonder you could not see to sing your hymn correctly."

"Oh, Mr. Chichester, how could you?"

"What?" looking as innocent as a lamb on a large scale.

"How could you startle me so? It put me out dreadfully."

"To have a great brown paw laid on your book?" stretching it out mischievously. "Serves you right, Miss Elliott; you were torturing my ear needlessly."

"You ought to have been singing yourself. I don't pity you," a little defiantly.

"Upon my honor, I am very sorry for you, though, Miss Elliott. Think of next Ash Wednesday—how uncomfortable you will feel during the Commination Service; leading that poor blind man all wrong, too."

Dym looked shocked.

"I suppose you can sing properly if you try."

"Will says so."

"What! Will Clericus! Never believe brothers, they are

such flatterers. Yes, you have a nice little lark-like voice, if you only cultivated it properly; the high notes were not satisfactory, though."

Dym inwardly resolved she would never sing in Mr. Chichester's presence again—a vow which circumstances soon obliged her to break.

"What a nice sermon Mr. Ainslie preached! Don't you think so?" trying to turn the conversation into a less personal channel.

"No, I don't," kicking the baize door lightly with his foot, and looking a little vexed.

"Why not?"

"Because—now, Miss Elliott, don't—you know I hate criticising sermons."

"Do you? How could I know? Ah, there is Will, and Mr. Ainslie with him. You will be glad of that; won't you, Mr. Chichester?"

"You will, you mean. It struck me we were rather boring each other;" a bit of honesty which somehow chilled Dym.

She walked home in silence, under the shelter of the big umbrella, between her brother and Mr. Chichester. Will had to warn her sometimes of the deep puddles. The meeting had disappointed her. Instinctively she felt Mr. Chichester's manner had a little changed—it was less genial and more authoritative. Somehow, even during the time she was Edith's governess, she had never before realized the great distance between them. Afterwards she understood that Guy Chichester had set up this slight barrier intentionally, though such was the man's unconventionality that he was often the first to break it down.

At their door he shook hands, and wished them good-night.

"What! you are not coming in?" asked Will, in surprise.

"No, my dear fellow; no, not to-night. I have an appointment down due west; my cousin Beatrix has invited me to a family council."

"Then why in the world did you tramp down here in the wet?" persisted his friend, laying a detaining hand on his arm.

"Not to hear Mr. Ainslie preach—no, nor you either, so don't expect a compliment. I came to deliver this;" taking a letter carefully from his breast-pocket, and handing it to Dym.

"For me?"

"Look at the direction," was the curt rejoinder.

Dym read: "Miss Elliott, care of the Reverend William Elliott," written in a flowing lady's hand; and then she turned it over and examined the crest: "*Qui patitur vincit*,—He conquers who endures."

"Why, that's our motto, Will."

"Impossible! It is our crest," interrupted Mr. Chichester. "The letter is from my mother. Are the Chichesters and Elliotts related to each other, then?"

"From your mother!" breathlessly came from Dym.

Her brother took the envelope quietly from her hand and examined it.

"The clasped hands over the shield—yes, that is ours. I believe, if the truth were known, we are sixth or seventh cousins removed—that is, if you are the Chichesters of Ingleside."

"Yes, of course," somewhat impatiently.

"I saw the family tree once somewhere. I know a Miss Fortescue, my mother's cousin, married a Chichester; and I believe, in a previous generation, there were other intermarriages between the Chichesters and Elliotts. I know my grandfather's name was Chichester Elliott, and my own name is Fortescue."

"Yes, I see; how droll! pleasant, though. I wonder what my mother would say to it, if I told her I had found some new cousins. I don't think Beatrix would be quite pleased" —with a smile at Dym, who was still standing perplexedly in the doorway. "Is your branch of the family quite extinct?"

Will pointed to Dym and himself.

"Humph! worthy representatives. I don't think we can quite claim cousinship, though, much as I should like it; the honor is too far removed for that; but I think I will plague Beatrix about our new relations."

"Please don't," broke out involuntarily from Dym. "But, Mr. Chichester, what makes your mother write to me?"

"Open it and see. But here I am keeping you both standing in the wet—good-night. By the by, Miss Elliott," coming back a few steps and speaking mysteriously, "you will not send your answer without letting me know what it is to be."

"But where am I to find you, Mr. Chichester?"

"Where, oh, where?" in a light, mocking voice. "Let me see; I have acted postman once in your behalf, so shall I do so again? Don't send your letter till you see me."

And, after issuing this peremptory order, Mr. Chichester again lifted his hat and departed.

"Now, Dym, for the letter," cried Will, when she had taken off her damp cloak and had entered the sitting-room. "How long do you suppose my patience can wait?"

And Dym, whose hot cheeks had not yet cooled from the excitement, drew her stool forward, and suffered her brother to read it over her shoulder.

"What a long letter! Oh, Will!"

"Hush; we will talk about it afterwards."

And Dym gave one little gasp, and hurried on.

"'My dear Miss Elliott,' it began. "What nice writing!" murmured Dym. "'My dear Miss Elliott, my son will have mutually introduced us to each other, and I do not think I need apologize for writing to you. I have long felt a great interest in your brother, from my son's account of him.'" "Much obliged to her," here came from Will, but Dym pinched him to be quiet. "'He is doing a noble work for St. Luke's, and needs all the help that our prayers and the prayers of the faithful can give him, to strengthen his hands in such an unequal contest; and though a perfect stranger to me, I need not say I have long included St. Luke's in my lists of intercessions.'" Will's face looked so droll at this juncture that Dym threatened to finish the letter by herself. "No, no; she means well; we are coming to the real business directly;" and they both read on:

"'My son tells me that you have lived for some little time with my sister, Mrs. Tressilian, in the capacity of Edith's governess, and that, owing to some disagreement with my eldest niece, you were obliged to leave Lansdowne House rather suddenly. Perhaps, as my son says there were faults on both sides, I had better not enter on this part of the subject.' "Quite right," muttered Dym; "what business has Mr. Chichester's mother to interfere?" but she cooled down a little farther on. "'My son hints that teaching is not your vocation, and that your friends wish to see you in some other capacity. I am greatly in need myself of a pleasant intelli-

gent young lady who would act as my companion. Do you think this would suit you? My son says it will exactly. I advise you, before you decide, to talk it over with him.

"'But, my dear Miss Elliott, it will be necessary for me to confide in you a little, in order that you may understand your future duties, should you think fit to accept my offer. I am afraid—for human nature is weak, and I may say I am afraid—that it may please Providence, in its mysterious dispensation, to afflict me with the loss of sight. I have been told by one of our first oculists that a cataract is slowly forming in one eye, and lately there have been the same symptoms in the other. If this goes on—and I still shrink from the necessary operation—this must result in ultimate blindness, to which, I confess, I look forward with some dread.

"'You will be kind enough not to mention this to my son, as I am happy to state that he is still in ignorance of all this; and, as the knowledge would distress him greatly, I wish it to be kept from him as long as possible. Perhaps his opportune suggestion of my having a companion to amuse me may help to defer this knowledge, as he will not notice my increasing helplessness quite so soon.

"'I can still write, but with difficulty, only all books are forbidden me; a good reader is therefore indispensable. And as my son tells me you have a fair voice and pleasant intonation, you will be a great acquisition to me, especially if you also relieve me of all necessary correspondence, and assist me in the several branches of needlework, from which, I am thankful to say, I am not as yet debarred.

"'I will leave my son to arrange about terms; perhaps we might say a hundred a year, if that will meet your views. I shall be glad if you will now communicate with me personally by letter, as, in the event of your acceptance, it would be as well that we should not remain strangers to each other.—With kind regards to your brother, I remain, dear Miss Elliott, yours truly,

"'CONSTANCE MEDLICOT CHICHESTER.

"'Ingleside, Birstwith, near Ripley.'

"'A hundred a year, and with Mr. Chichester's mother! Oh, Will, Will!" and in her fullness of joy Dym gave him a great hug, which made him wince with pain. Not a trace of

it was suffered to appear in his face, though, as he took off his spectacles and proudly surveyed his sister.

"A noble sum—and at eighteen, too! Why, Dym, your fortune's made. Latimer Chichester has been your fairy godmother."

"And to think he had it in his pocket all the time he was so disagreeable! Will, do you think that is what really took him away?"

"I should not wonder."

"What, all the way to the North, and for me?"

"Very likely; but I should advise you not to speculate on probabilities. How about being a daily governess now, Dym?"

Dym contemplated him ruefully, and then her face clouded.

"Well, little one, what now?"

"Oh, Will, I forgot it was so far away."

"Due north and south—Yorkshire and Kentish Town; but never mind that."

"Ah, but I do mind. Oh, Will, if you could only live there too—in the Happy Valley, as Edith calls it."

"My dear, I am cut out for London work; no inglorious ease, no rose-covered vicarage, for me. The grapes are sour, Dimples."

"It would just suit you," drawing a long sigh. "Oh, you dear, patient boy, how am I to leave you?"

Will patted her cheek indulgently, with a hand that was too white and thin, and smiled a little sadly when Dym pulled it down and kissed it in her girlish reverence.

"You glorious old Conqueror!"

"You silly child, you mean. Come, Dym, this is not the way to sing your *Te Deum*."

"I have not forgotten it," returned Dym, very sweetly. "Why is it one always feels good when one is happy?"

"Because happiness is intended to be our normal state, I suppose, and 'we carry this consciousness about with us as a remnant of our lost Paradise,' as some one says; and as a sign and seal of our future one," he continued, almost in a whisper, but Dym heard him.

Will rarely talked his religion, even to his sister. He broke off now to remind her it was late; so Dym went off to her room, and dreamt the pleasant dreams of youth, and Will sat far into the night, till he waxed drowsy over his work.

Dym was sitting at work the next day, and the floor was strewn with the pretty rose-colored breadths of a new dress she had just bought for herself, when Mr. Chichester walked quietly in and sat down beside her.

A moment afterwards he had taken up one of the breadths, and was examining it critically.

"Very pretty. What do you call this—grogram?"

"Oh, Mr. Chichester, as though you did not know better than that!" laughed Dym; "grogram—who ever heard of such a stuff nowadays?"

"Is it out of fashion, then? I should think Pamela, or Clarissa Harlowe, or one of Sir Charles Grandison's ladies must have worn grogram. I suppose now you call this general flimsiness muslin. I knew an old gentleman, a friend of my mother's, who always classed all materials for ladies' dresses under the one head—'grogram.' Well, what do all these preparations portend?"

"Guess," was the laughing answer.

Dym looked very fresh and bright this afternoon, and she did not feel a bit afraid of Mr. Chichester. What a beautifier happiness is! Even that severe critic Guy Chichester was obliged to allow, as he looked at her, that there was something very attractive about Miss Elliott. "Guess," Dym had said, with the display of dimples that had won for her her brother's pet name. Mr. Chichester could not forbear a smile.

"As though I have not guessed long ago. It means, of course, that you have accepted my mother's invitation."

Dym nodded blithely.

"Indeed I have. Oh, Mr. Chichester, a hundred a year!" And her look added, as plainly as a look could, "How delightful!"

"Does a hundred a year represent happiness to you, Miss Elliott?" a little sadly.

"No; but it offers independence, relief from worry, my own honest maintenance, and a chance of saving."

"What! all that for a hundred a year?" incredulously.

"Of course; but, Mr. Chichester," dropping her voice and speaking very earnestly, "do you really think I am worth so much?"

"Now, Miss Telemachus, how am I to answer that question?" Dym blushed and laughed again.

"I won't have you quote that against me," she said seriously; "it is quite right for me to ask you this, because your mother says I am to consult you about it."

"Leaves it to me, does she? Mistaken woman! Suppose, Miss Elliott, we say two hundred, then," with a merry twinkle.

"Mr. Chichester, I did think you were going to help me," somewhat reproachfully.

"Help you! Of course I will; as regards this, it seems my mother names her own terms. I can only advise you to close with them as quickly as possible."

"There is my answer," returned Dym, promptly, handing him the letter.

"Fastened up securely! I am not to read it, then?"

"Of course not; it is all right. Will has looked over it."

"Has he? Well, and what does Will Clericus say—about the whole thing, I mean?"

"He is so pleased—so grateful about it all; he never expected me to do half so well, I believe; he calls you my fairy godmother, Mr. Chichester."

Mr. Chichester threw back his head and laughed. "Well done, Will Clericus. Why, that is better than dubbing myself Mentor. I can't promise you a pumpkin chariot to convey you to Ingleside, Miss Elliott; but perhaps I might manage to meet you at the station with my bays."

"Do you think that will be necessary? You must remember I am going to be your mother's companion," said Dym, bravely, with the sweet honesty which came so naturally to her.

Mr. Chichester's kindly liking for the lonely girl positively deepened into something like respect at this.

"Now, I shouldn't have thought you capable of such a speech," he retorted, bluntly. "Never mind what I mean by that; I am given to speak in hieroglyphics. It is the fashion at Ingleside to fetch all our friends from the station. I suppose, though you are my mother's companion, you will allow me, if only for your brother's sake, to include you in that category?"

Dym gave him a grateful look.

"One thing," he went on with the same kind seriousness, "I want to warn you against speculating too much on your chances of happiness with us: castles in the air are apt to

dissolve in a blue mist; even the Happy Valley has its drawback. We have no perfect paradises here, unfortunately: so my advice to you, Miss Elliott, is, take everything as it comes, and make the best of it. Why, even my mother, though she is the dearest mother in the world, may disappoint you sometimes."

"But she is kind, is she not?" asked Dym, rather timidly. She had conjured up in her imagination a very stately old-fashioned dame, very much like Guy himself, only somewhat oracular in speech, and she did not wish her illusion to be dispelled.

"Kind! my mother is goodness itself; but you must not cross her pet hobbies, if Ingleside is to be the paradise you paint it."

"What are they? Don't you think it might be as well to know them beforehand?" asked Dym, rather anxiously.

"Oh, you want to know how to steer, do you? What a crafty little person you must be! Well, I advise you to beware of Scylla and Charybdis. Whatever your secret opinion may be about that worthy divine, never say anything against Jeremy Taylor, and always look edified when my mother quotes him: that is Scylla, rock number one. Now for the whirlpool Charybdis: Never praise Miss Nethecote."

"Jeremy Taylor! Why, I have never read him, or Thomas à Kempis either," cried Dym, in despair. "And who is Miss Nethecote?"

"A lady you will often see," returned Mr. Chichester, briefly, and stroking his beard. Probably he repented of this bit of confidence, for he frowned somewhat, and changed the subject.

"Did my mother mention any special duties that you were to undertake, Miss Elliott?"

"Yes; but they sounded too pleasant to be called duties. I am to read to her, and carry on her correspondence, and to help her with her fancy-work——"

"And wash the poodle, eh? By the way, my mother hates dogs, and I fill the house with them. Dutiful, isn't it? Miss Elliott, you talk lightly of your duties—'where ignorance is bliss,' you know. You have no idea of the onerous task that lies before. A hundred a year is buying you cheaply; you will be a sort of a white slave in Ingleside. Do you know,

my mother is a prodigious reader?—only hitherto she has always read to herself. This is a new whim, having some one to read to her."

"I shall like it above all things," maintained Dym, stoutly; "teaching Edith was hard work, compared to this."

"Wait till you have tried," with a comical glance. "How will you like reading by method, I wonder—the 'Times' and theology in the morning, biography and travels in the afternoon, and works of fiction in the evening? Beware of making a false computation of time, Miss Elliott. To read any other than 'Paley's Evidences' before eleven, or to touch 'Letters from Zanzibar' before noon, would be a grievous offense in my mother's eyes. I don't believe she could enjoy the richest humor of Dickens till the lamps were lit. I found her making a night of it once over 'David Copperfield.' I remember well she twice sent her maid up-stairs to fetch her a pocket-handkerchief, when Dorothy ought to have brought her a night-cap instead."

"You won't frighten me, Mr. Chichester."

"No, I believe you are invulnerable this afternoon. My mother is rather fond of a Johnsonian style of correspondence. But do you round your periods well, and dot all your i's?"

"Will says I never do," was the laughing response.

Mr. Chichester shook his head gravely.

"I am only warning. Never mind, I have discharged my conscience, and now abandon you to your own steering. Seriously, did my mother really write you a kind letter, Miss Elliott?"

"Oh, yes, it was very, very kind; and indeed, Mr. Chichester, at the risk of driving you away, I must say thank you for all this."

"Well, say it, and be done with it," rather gruffly. Then, after a moment's silence that frightened Dym, "It was curious, wasn't it, that my mother should have been looking out for some one of the kind?"

"Very strange."

"Why, I expected to have a vast amount of trouble in persuading her to try you; instead of which, she thanked me with tears in her eyes for proposing it. If she did not look just as well and cheerful as usual, I should have been

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quite uneasy; as it was, I was rather taken aback by her ready consent. She did not say anything to you in her letter about getting old, or any nonsense of that sort, did she?" turning on her abruptly.

"No," returned Dym, hesitating; she must be very careful how she guarded Mrs. Chichester's confidence. "She spoke very kindly about Will."

"Ah, you are in clover there. You may talk all day about St. Luke's to my mother, and she would never be weary of it. Clergymen are her pet hobby. Pity we can't have your brother down there," with a dissatisfied shrug.

"Haven't you a nice vicar?" asked Dym, pleased with these snatches of confidence.

"Humph! my mother likes him, though I notice she never says anything about his sermons. Mr. Fortescue—he is a relative too, you see; Cousin Latimer we call him—has one fault; he can't forget he is a Fortescue, and unfortunately his wife cannot forget it either, or that she was a baronet's daughter. It is such a pity; the vicarage vies with the great house in setting the fashion in Birstwith: only don't tell my mother so, please."

"Why?" in a tone of much amusement.

"Miss Elliott, do you always ask so many questions? I think 'come and see' shall be my stock answer. Please to recollect my mother is a sort of female Louis Quatorze in all matters of form and etiquette, and that the Trevors, and Miss Nethecote, and even my high and mighty Cousin Katherine herself are only satellites of her court. But a truce to our idle gossip. You are neglecting your work shamefully, Miss Elliott; and here comes Will Clericus."

Will had plenty to say to his friend; and they instantly plunged into St. Luke's and parish matters. And it was not till the end of the evening that Dym's private affairs came on the tapis again.

"We have settled everything except the time, I believe," observed Dym's fairy godmother.

Will looked up quickly, and then sighed.

"You mean when I am to lose Dym. When do you think it will be convenient to Mrs. Chichester to receive her?"

"To-morrow."

"Oh, Will!" with an appealing look at him.

"Better let me go home first and deliver the letter, or shall I post it?" looking coolly at Dym's frightened face.

"You will have to reconcile yourself to Peter and the bays."

"Shall we say next week, Latimer—pooh, I mean Chichester?"

"Right. That will suit all parties. Well, Elliott, it is good-by to St. Luke's."

"Do you mean you are not coming back for a long time?"

"That depends on my moods and tenses, and on certain—yes, on certain other circumstances; besides, for the present I am going to try how idleness agrees with me."

"You have tried it once too often, by your own account. I only judge you from your own words. Why not travel?"

"A pretty thing to say to a man who has been bored at the Pyramids, yawned over the Prophet's tomb, who has bartered temper and Russian furs together, and been fit to drown himself in the falls of Niagara."

"Turn over a new leaf, then. Try farming."

"Oh, Nethecote does all that."

"Who is Nethecote?"

Dym, who had longed to ask the same question, almost clapped her hands. She listened, full of interest.

"Oh, he farms all the land for twelve miles round—mine, his own, and Harry Trevor's in the bargain; makes a good thing out of it, I should say. I remember the time when he was only under-bailiff. It shows what a man can do by industry and perseverance. Everything old Humphrey does turns to gold."

"Is he very old?" asked Dym, curiously. She had forgotten, and was wondering almost again.

"Is he such a very 'aged, aged man,' you mean? What did I say, Miss Elliott? Come and see." And, thus rebuked, Dym went back to her work in silence, and shortly afterwards the subject dropped altogether.

The next evening Dym heard that Mr. Chichester had been at the night-school, and had given the boys a supper; and the following day he came to wish them good-by.

"Keep up a good heart, Elliott, when your sister is gone. We'll take care of her; and you've promised to come down and pay us a visit. My mother insists on it, remember." Then to Dym: "Good-by, Miss Elliott; *au revoir*. When

next we meet, I hope you will have forgiven me for my harshness to Edith's governess."

"Oh, Mr. Chichester, that was forgiven long ago."

"Very well; then you must promise me absolution beforehand for the very next offense I commit. Look out for the bays on Thursday." And then he shook hands with them both and left the room; but Will followed him, and the two were walking up and down before Paradise Row for a long time. The street was noisy and full of children. Dym, from the window, saw Guy Chichester gently pick up a crying child and send it in to his mother; and once even, in the midst of what seemed to be an engrossing talk, he interfered between a knot of boys who were beginning a scuffle; and lastly, as a Sister of Mercy—rather a rare spectacle in that neighborhood—came swiftly down the street in long black cloak and close bonnet, under which was a sweet, kindly young face, she saw Guy Chichester raise his hat and stand bareheaded till she had passed.

Dym had very few evenings with her brother, and the last came all too quickly, as last evenings will do, and the next morning Will took her to King's Cross himself, and put her in the second-class carriage.

"Well, good-by, Dimples; take care of your little self."

"Oh, good-by, my darling Will Conqueror," cried the little sister, sorrowfully.

"Don't fall to hero-worship too strongly; and, as Chichester himself says, 'look out for breakers ahead.' There, God bless you, pet; you know how I shall miss you;" and something husky came into Will's throat. Dym could only cling about his neck, crying; her heart was too full for speech.

"What a good face that young man has, and yet how painfully deformed he is!" said a young lady to her father, who was watching them from the platform; "and, papa, I do believe he is a clergyman, too; how sorry the poor thing seems to be!"

"Ah, a sweetheart or sister, I suppose; come, jump in, Minnie." And Will, squeezing his sister's hand, drew back and let them pass him. Five minutes afterwards the train glided from the station, a handkerchief fluttered, hands waved, hats were lifted, the porters jostled past him, and William Elliott was left alone.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE VALLEY OF THE NIDD.

WHO has not heard of the Valley of the Nidd?

Visitors who resort to Harrogate, that gay queen of inland watering-places, are tolerably conversant with that fair tract of country, well watered as another Eden by the river Nidd, wherein lies this beautiful and picturesque valley.

Pateley Bridge, Nidderdale, Birstwith, Hampsthwaite, and Ripley, all in their turn recall summer wanderings and pleasant days of excursion and holiday, and, looking down over the rich extent of meadow and pasture, thickly sown with woods and plantations, one is driven to confess that this is the garden of the West Riding of Yorkshire. Down in a dip or hollow of the valley lies Birstwith, its postal town being Ripley, dropped down snugly on the banks of the Nidd, a tiny toy village or "story-book village," as some chance visitors termed it.

There is a pleasant Arcadian simplicity about Birstwith, all the same that there is a flavor of monopoly about it. Though only twenty minutes by rail from Harrogate, and boasting a station of its own, the influx of visitors is rare; the only lodgings to be procured are just opposite the butcher's. "Not at home to strangers" is as plainly legible in the whole aspect of the village as though it were written up on a sign-board and creaked noisily over the Railway Inn.

Not that there is any lack of hospitality among the Birstwithians; on the contrary, the curious stranger, though uninvited and his presence by no means solicited, is always made heartily welcome at the vicarage and the mill. The hospitality of the North is proverbial, nor is Birstwith one whit behind in this respect, though she guards her beauties coyly from undiscriminative eyes, and would fain hide herself from general observation. And a fairer English village never lay shrouded among the Yorkshire moors.

From the level platform of the station the view is singularly graceful and picturesque. The arch of the road leading to the

village with the weir itself is indeed hidden, but the mill and the mill-house, with its blackened ruin standing amidst the trim garden, is the first object visible; then the church and the Great House, which, from its elevation, looks down over the entire village; houses sparsely scattered here and there gleam out in soft whiteness among the park-like meadows, the river Nidd flowing through them, now gliding on between its banks under a wealth of umbrageous foliage, now chafing over its smooth white boulders, now twined into narrow curves, or forming dark cool pools, where the small red oxen come down to drink—river and meadows and richly-wooded banks going on alluringly for miles.

Dym, who was well tired by her journey and her long waiting at the bustling Harrogate station, trusted, from the slackening of the engine, that they were drawing to their journey's end, and could not help an audible sigh of disappointment when Hampsthwaite instead of Birstwith met her eye. Her sole fellow-passenger, who had got in at Harrogate, put down his paper and smiled, and then, with a thorough Englishman's *mauvaise honte*, not being able to make up his mind to speak, took it up again.

Dym yawned and looked at him; he was a tall muscular-looking man, very tanned and freckled as though by constant exposure to sun and wind, with strongly developed homely features, and sandy—no, red hair, somewhat sun-dried too; he was dressed in a rough gray suit, and wore shooting-gaiters and a broad-brimmed straw hat, almost as broad as a planter's; his hands were large and freckled also: nevertheless, Dym felt he was a gentleman.

But his face did not interest her, so she read the back of the paper instead. The "Pateley Bridge, Nidderdale, and Ripon Herald"—how dull it sounded after the "Daily Telegraph!" Dym could just catch sight of the right-hand advertisement—"The Braisty Woods Estate, in the parish of Kirkby Malzeard"—what names! there's a worse one lower down—"Scriven-with-Tentergate;" who ever heard of such a place! and Dym read on: "Scriven-with-Tentergate. To be sold by auction, at the Commercial Hotel, Knaresborough, all that close of excellent grass land called Halfpenny Close, containing 1a. 2r. 0p."—what ever does that mean, I wonder!—"be the same more or less"—how enigmatical!—"situate in the town-

ship of Scriven-with-Tentergate, adjoining the Knaresborough and Boroughbridge Road," read on Dym, perplexedly, till she was aware of a pair of light hazel eyes peering at her over the top of the paper. Dym bit her lip and turned away. "May I offer you the paper?" volunteered the owner of the eyes, in a voice not quite free from the northern dialect, and with a decided burr in it. Dym declined in rather a shamefaced manner, and then, curiosity getting the better of her timidity, "Are we far from Birstwith?" she asked, with difficulty suppressing another yawn. The gentleman smiled; he had a wide mouth, and when he smiled he showed a row of strong white teeth, and the skin under his eyes puckered and wrinkled up; it was odd, but it was irresistible; it made Dym smile too.

"We shall be there in a very few minutes now," he observed. "We have just passed Hampsthwaite."

"Where the station-master had a wooden leg; yes, I know." And then, in spite of her efforts to be very proper, Dym could not help putting another rather funny question: "Do all the station-masters about here have only one leg or one arm?" for Dym's quick eyes had noted this singularity.

It was impossible to help laughing, which her new acquaintance did very heartily: it is astonishing how a laugh does away with all stiffness, even in a railway-compartment where there are only two occupants.

"You have noticed this peculiarity at our three little stations, then: these disabled pensioners of the service are placed there because traffic is easy and work light. Our station-master at Birstwith has his full complement of legs and arms. You are passing through?" with an interrogative glance, not inquisitive, but courteous.

"I am staying there; please let me know as soon as we are in sight of it," she added, in a pleading voice.

"Which will be in a few minutes. Ah, I know now: you are the young lady from London whom Mrs. Chichester is expecting."

"How do you know that?" turning on him sharply, and her manner said, very plainly, "Who are you, I should like to know?"

"Every one knows every one else's business in Birstwith; that comes of living in a village. Now look out from your or my window; there's the mill."

"What a pretty garden!—and water, too! Oh, and what an ugly black ruin!"

"Marks of some recent fire; there, now you see the church—such a lovely church—and the Great House, as we call it; Ingleside, I mean. Now here we are at the station; let me help you out."

A fresh free wind blew round Dym as she alighted; the late beams of an August sun touched the level glories of meadows and rivers and lit them up into radiance; the west was a mass of rose color and purple clouds; from woods and meadows the birds sang lustily; the lowing of cattle came over the uplands. Dym stood on the high platform, a little doubtful and confused by the sudden beauty, while her traveling companion handed out plaid shawl, bonnet-box, and black bag.

"Halloo, Humphrey, playing ladies'-man, by way of change? Leave all that for Dyson, man. Here, Dyson, see after this lady's luggage, and send it up to Ingleside. Now, Miss Elliott, and how do you do?"

A moment before, Dym was feeling strange and uneasy; now she seemed to be back at St. Luke's again, or even in the narrow close school-room at Lansdowne House. Guy Chichester's figure, in the old shooting-coat, looked so delightfully familiar, even amid its new surroundings, that her courage rose again. She put her hand in his, and declared, in answer to his inquiry, she was only a very, very little bit tired, albeit a few minutes since she had been yawning fearfully.

"That's well," he replied, with a glance of amity that made her foolish little heart beat more quickly. "You must have had a terribly dull journey, though, all alone from King's Cross. Where did you put in an appearance, Humphrey?"

"Harrogate," was the laconic answer.

"Harrogate! Harry Trevor has come up by this train too, I see. Well, you may safely trust your goods and chattels to Dyson. Miss Elliott, will you come with me, please? Humphrey, I suppose I can't give you a lift?"

"Not exactly; Honor is waiting tea for me. Well, squire, good-night. Good-night, Miss—Miss——"

"Miss Elliott. What, haven't you exchanged cards yet? Permit me; Miss Elliott—Mr. Humphrey Nethecote, the worthiest and the most honest Yorkshireman in the whole of the West Riding." And, after this singular introduction, Mr.

Chichester turned on his heel with a nod and "follow me" wave of the hand, and preceded them down the steep staircase, turning back to offer a hand to Dym, who was not quite so light-footed as usual.

"Been far, squire? The bays look heated."

"Only to Ripley and back. Took the wagonette, you see. What's the matter with the mare's foot, Peter—the off-side one?" And Mr. Chichester went anxiously round to see, returning a moment later with "all right," and bidding Dym jump in.

"Down, Kelpie, down."

"Kelpie—oh, I know. What a beautiful dog!" exclaimed Dym, as a large Scotch collie dashed delightedly round Mr. Nethecote and then slobbered, well pleased, over his hand.

"Kelpie knows his friends, Humphrey. His delight is a tacit reproach for not coming up oftener to Ingleside. Change your mind now, man, and throw over tea for a slice of our black mutton."

Mr. Nethecote shook his head. "What would Honor say?"

Mr. Chichester, who was drawing on his driving-gloves, merely shrugged his shoulders expressively. "Well, if you won't be persuaded, good-by, and love to Honor. We will bring Miss Elliott to see her some day. Are you quite comfortable, Miss Elliott?" regarding her benevolently from his seat. "We will drive slowly through the village for your sake. You won't mind the mare being a little playful at starting. No matter how much I work her, she's always skittish, the jade—like the rest of her sex," Dym was sure she heard him add under his breath. "There, let go her head, Peter." And the next minute they were clattering over the bridge, where Mr. Nethecote, who was striding on, nearly tumbled over a perambulator and a baby, the two elder children being too much engaged in curtsying to the squire to wheel it out of the way.

Dym uttered a little cry of admiration as they passed the mouth of the weir. Some boys were splashing bare-legged among the boulders; the water had a silvery gleam and flash; the trees on either side drooped their dark branches into the stream; under the bridge there was a strand of pebbles; the mill-wheel whirred noisily.

"They are late at work to-night," she heard Mr. Chichester say to Peter.

Past two shady-looking houses, with a drinking-pump beside them; past a long stretch of level grass-land, so evenly kept and so well planted with trees that Dym thought it must be the park belonging to the Great House, till she found out her mistake afterwards; past the almshouses, with the monumental inscription in the centre of the garden; past the post-office, the tailor's, and one or two other shops; then came the vicarage, a low gray house, set prettily in its own grounds, and looking on to the church, which stood high, and had to be gained by formidable tiers of steps; round a sharp corner and past another gray house; then the lodge gates, and a long but not very wide sweep of carriage-road leading to the Great House itself. But Dym noticed they had been ascending ever since they had left the mill: this elevation gave her a glorious view over the country.

In Dym's eyes Ingleside was a very imposing residence. A large, white, irregularly built house, with innumerable windows, each commanding separate views of interest, surrounded by large sloping gardens, laid out tastefully in flower parterres and terraces, and with walled-in kitchen gardens, whereof Dym caught sunny glimpses.

"*Voilà* Ingleside. Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest—that's our motto, Miss Elliott. Take care of the wheel; let me help you down," coming round to her assistance. "Where's my mother?" he inquired of the gray-haired butler, to whom the sound of wheels had advertised their arrival.

"In the drawing-room. Dinner is ready, squire."

"Not served, I hope. Miss Elliott, you will not be able to change your toilette to-night. Tired, eh?" with one of those abrupt surveys that were natural to Mr. Chichester.

"No," replied Dym, almost inaudibly; but she did not volunteer the statement that she felt very nervous. She followed Mr. Chichester, keeping very closely in his shadow, as they passed through the large pleasant hall, prettily inlaid with tessellated pavement, and then into a side-corridor, with a painted window and a conservatory, where Dym got a delicious glimpse of cool green ferns, and heard the bubble of a fountain; then a door was flung open, a sweet soft perfume as of roses suddenly pervaded the air, and then Dym found herself in a large

low room, with narrow windows opening on to the lawn, and full of old-fashioned chintz couches and settees. A tall beautiful-faced woman, looking in her brocade and lace ruffles as though she had just stepped out from a picture-frame, came forward to meet them.

"Mother, I have brought Miss Elliott, after all. I told you I should be back from Ripley in time to meet the train."

Dym was taken by the hand and kindly scrutinized.

"You are very welcome, my dear;" then, the tone relaxing from its slight formality with excessive surprise, "How very young you are, Miss Elliott! Why, Guy, this is hardly more than a child."

Mr. Chichester laughed. "Why, indeed, mother, I believe Miss Elliott has attained the sober age of eighteen," he began; but Dym, who by reason of her frequent failures had been taught to consider her youth as a fault, broke out here a little pitifully.

"Please don't say I am too young," she said, addressing Mrs. Chichester; "I shall get older soon. They all tell me that, and then I lose heart about things; but, indeed, I do mean to try my best to please you." And as Dym ended her little speech, faltering and blushing and looking ready to cry, she found a motherly kiss imprinted on her cheek, and herself placed on a corner of the couch with kindly peremptoriness.

"That's right, mother: she looks terribly tired. I believe Miles is just going to sound the gong for dinner. Miss Elliott, you have had the dust and fatigue of a long journey. Ingleside is Liberty Hall—we have no rules of the Medes and Persians here. My mother will let you do just as you like. Will you come down to dinner with us, or have a cup of tea in your own room?"

"Oh, a cup of tea, please," gasped out Dym. It was all so strange and grand, and Dym felt so travel-soiled beside Mrs. Chichester's silvery brocade, a little rest and quiet would be refreshing; it was so thoughtful of Mr. Chichester to propose it.

"Shall I ring for Dorothy, mother?"

"No, Guy, thank you. I will show Miss Elliott to her room myself. Come, my dear, come;" and Dym was thankful to obey.

"I thought you would prefer a small room next to me

rather than a large one in the next wing," observed Mrs. Chichester, as they went up the low broad stairs together.

Dym, who was admiring the polished oak and the antique carving of the balustrades, said, gratefully, "Oh, yes, thank you."

"It is the Gray Room. We call all our rooms after the color of the paper and hangings. Mine is the Blue Room, and my son's, which is opposite, the Red Room. This is yours, Miss Elliott."

Dym remembered her garret and throne of boxes at Lansdowne House, and the little glimpse of the green park seen over the roofs of houses. The Gray Room was small, but its two windows commanded an enchanting prospect of the garden, church, and meadows, with silvery flashes of the Nidd sparkling through the trees. Dym's brief survey took in an easy-chair, a reading-table with a bowl of roses on it, and a little bed, all gray and rose pink; and then Cinderella gave a long-drawn sigh of pleasure.

"How nice and pretty! too pretty for me, is it not? I have never had such a room in my life before."

Mrs. Chichester smiled benignantly at the girl's frankness.

"I hope you will enjoy many pleasant dreams in it, my dear. Ah, there's the gong, and I must not keep my son waiting. You shall have some tea, and when you are rested, Dorothy shall help you to unpack and arrange your things. Remember, you are to make yourself quite at home."

Dym's first thought when she was left alone was, if only Will could see her; and the next, a feeling of wonderment that this should be Mrs. Tressilian's sister.

Mrs. Tressilian was very kind and motherly, but "how unlike," soliloquized Dym, as she recalled the fair lymphatic face and somewhat obese proportions of that lady.

Mrs. Chichester was tall and somewhat full in person, but she carried herself as erect as a girl. Her complexion had retained its delicate coloring of youth, and the large soft white curls were just suited to her peculiar style of beauty. She had evidently been a belle in her youth, and still gloried innocently in that fact. Dym thought she had never seen a statelier gentlewoman. She told Mr. Chichester afterwards that she admired his mother's quaint old-fashioned way of dressing herself. "It is so picturesque, and so out of the common," she said.

"Ah, we've got to grogram at last," he returned, smiling. "None of your flimsy material, your fly-catching sort of dresses, for my mother. If Jeremy Taylor had drawn up sumptuary laws, ordering 'that ye habits of ye gentlewomen be always silken or of clothe of velvet or brocaded tissues,' my mother could not have worn those fabrics more obediently. Have you noticed what a beautiful hand she has, Miss Elliott, and how she always wears lace ruffles to set it off? You have not an ugly hand yourself, by the way: why not try what real Valenciennes will do for you? Isn't my mother a regular female Louis Quatorze?"

A very neat-handed Phyllis, evidently a village maiden, brought up Dym's tea. It turned out her name was Phyllis, and that she was especially bidden to wait on the new companion. Dym liked her rosy cheeks and rustic manners exceedingly. She found out afterwards she was the miller's daughter, and, being a *protégée* of Mrs. Chichester's, had been taken to serve at the Great House, "there being so many of us, miss, and the mill-house being hardly big enough for the whole of us."

Dym was delighted with Phyllis, but she stood greatly in awe of Mistress Dorothy. Dorothy wore a black silk, which was fresher than Dym's very best company dress; she had gray curls, pinned up in imitation of Mrs. Chichester, and a sober, somewhat hard-featured face. Dym would willingly have declined her assistance if she dared, but eighteen is not prolific in moral courage. Dorothy's attentions were terrifying, but they were scarcely to be set aside.

Dym's cheeks burned as her one box was unpacked and her poor little dresses laid out on the bed one by one by Dorothy's skillful hands. What would Mrs. Chichester's grand maid think of their scanty number, and of all her little contrivances, —the few laces she had picked to pieces, and washed and ironed herself, the collars she had stitched, her little stock of ribbon and finery, the one simple straw bonnet, with its fresh trimmings, which, with her old brown hat, was all Dym could boast?

Dym's heart need not have throbbed so in its girlish pride and wounded vanity. If Dorothy had a hard-featured face, she had a warm heart. Her quick eyes certainly detected the poverty, but it only moved her to kindly pity for the young stranger.

"Miss Beatrix doesn't fit her dresses better," she observed, during the confidential period when she was brushing out her mistress's hair.

The new inmate at Ingleside was sleeping peacefully when Mrs. Chichester and her maid were discussing her with the kindly curiosity and discrimination natural to women. "And then everything so neat, too. She can work lace rarely, I see; and her cuffs and collars were of such a beautiful color. One always knows when one touches a lady's things; a lady's a lady, be she ever so poor."

I think it would have been a salve to Dym's pride if she had heard Dorothy.

Mrs. Chichester did not come up again, but she sent a message by Phyllis, hoping that Miss Elliott had all she wanted, and that she would recommend her to seek her bed early.

Dym did not do this, but sat up instead writing a letter to Will, which drowsiness did not permit her to finish. She had only laid her head on her lavender-scented pillow, when she smelt the fragrance of a cigar under her window, and heard Guy Chichester's step on the graveled terrace below. A moment after he called to his dog, and Dym was sure she could hear them both scrunching through the shrubbery; and so still was the night that the clang of the iron gate nearly a quarter of a mile off was distinctly audible.

"Going out for a walk. Why, it must be eleven o'clock. How strange!" thought Dym, drowsily; and then she fell asleep.

It was late the next morning—nearly nine o'clock—when Phyllis woke her. Dym jumped up in a fright.

"Mrs. Chichester said you were not to be disturbed earlier, miss," observed her little handmaiden.

But Dym was not to be convinced, and dressed herself in a hurry.

She turned the handles of several doors—the dining-room, billiard-room, and lastly Mr. Chichester's library—before she discovered the morning-room, or Green Room as it was phrased, where she found Mrs. Chichester sitting alone knitting, while a substantial meal, evidently untouched, lay on the table.

"Good-morning, my dear."

"Good-morning—but, oh, Mrs. Chichester, have I kept you waiting?"

"Breakfast never waits for any one at Ingleside," was the somewhat dignified response. "It was my own choice to keep you company this morning, instead of breakfasting alone. Dorothy always brings me a cup of tea in my room. Sometimes, though not often, I wait for Guy."

"Indeed! Is he so late? I thought I heard him go out last night," was Dym's thoughtless answer.

Mrs. Chichester, who was moving to the table, looked a little surprised that her son's movements had been observed.

"Yes, he very often gives Kelpie a run. Then he is a great reader, and almost always sits up at night when he is at home. My son rarely breakfasts with us. But it strikes me I have forgotten my first duty as a hostess. I hope you have slept well, Miss Elliott."

"Very well, thank you," replied Dym.

And then, as though in flat contradiction of his mother's words, Mr. Chichester walked into the room.

"What, Guy, up already!"

"Down, I suppose you mean. Good-morning, mother," kissing her; "good-morning, Miss Elliott. Well, have you slept off your fatigue yet?"

"Oh, yes," observed Dym, joyously.

The prospect of her *tête-à-tête* meal with Mrs. Chichester had appeared rather formidable. In spite of his abruptness and occasional sarcasm, she was beginning to look upon Mr. Chichester as an old acquaintance, and to feel more at home when he was present. She still stood in awe of him, it was true; but in his genial moods he could put her at her ease with him, and his face and voice always recalled St. Luke's. She had a notion that he could be very formidable too on occasions; but on this first morning the squire looked as smooth as his own beard; under some circumstances that could be rough also.

"I'll be bound you have written to Will Clericus already. Look at her, mother; she begins to redden already like a culprit."

"I did that last night; but I have not finished my letter; I got so sleepy," stammered Dym.

"Serves you right. Couldn't he wait another day? I telegraphed to him that you had arrived safely."

"Did you, Mr. Chichester? How very kind!"

"I suppose I was in one of my amiable moods last night. It will prevent anxiety in No. 3, Paradise Row. Did you see there was another horrible collision on the Great Northern, mother—eight killed and seventeen injured?"

"No, Guy, I have not read it," a little quietly. "I think, if Miss Elliott be not too tired, after breakfast I will get her to give me the particulars."

"What, before Jeremy Taylor, mother?"

And the twinkle of his eyes said, plainly, "Your work is beginning already, you see." But Mrs. Chichester, as though her son's joke did not quite please her, changed the subject altogether.

Mrs. Chichester spent her mornings in a large upper room looking over the porch and leading out of the Blue Chamber. It was called her dressing-room; but there were no other evidences of her toilette than were contained in the heavy japanned boxes where, years afterwards, Dym found relics and hoards of fine cobweb lace, an Oriental chain of pearls, and other old heirlooms.

The room was pleasant, and had a delightful view from one of the windows, beside which was an old high-backed chair of carved oak, and a table covered profusely with books and works. At this table Dym found herself ensconced shortly after breakfast, but the "Times" as yet had not been taken up.

"Do not read just yet; I want to talk to you. It seems to me that we ought to know each other a little," Mrs. Chichester observed, with a peremptory graciousness which had driven the girl into shamefaced silence.

Already Dym had discovered she was a little afraid of Mrs. Chichester, in spite of her beauty and goodness. Dym was quite sure, from her son's account, that she was very good.

"We ought to know each other a little better—don't you think so? My son and I both hope you will be happy here, Miss Elliott."

Dym hoped so too with all her heart, but she assented only briefly.

"My son has taken a great interest in St. Luke's and in your brother. Guy exaggerates a little in his descriptions, but he will have it that your brother is little short of a saint."

"There is no one like Will," said Dym; but the tears sprang to her eyes. In mentioning St. Luke's Mrs. Chichester had effectually broken the ice.

"Yes, Mr. Elliott seems a thorough clergyman. What a pity he is in such poor health! We must have him down here, and see what Yorkshire air will do for him."

"Oh, thank you," cried Dym, gratefully. She was quite touched by this unexpected kindness. She gave Mrs. Chichester a moving little account of Will's long illness and heroism, and self-denying labors in the parish. "The poorer a person is, the better Will seems to like him. He will have it," finished the little sister, "that a sick person ought to excite our reverence rather than our compassion. He quotes that from his favorite saint, St. Francis de Sales."

"St. Louis of France used to tend the sick on his knees, with uncovered head. I like these notions," moralized the elder lady. "These sentiments of respect are not common among young people nowadays. As Guy says, the old chivalry of religion is fast dying out. I dare say," speaking hesitatingly, as though doubtful of her own prudence—"I dare say Mr. Elliott somewhat wondered at my son's sudden devotion to St. Luke's."

"I think Will was rather perplexed at first," said Dym, honestly.

"And afterwards? I hope you do not think me curious; but Guy is so unlike other men that I cannot help wondering what people think of his sudden flights and fancies."

Here was a dilemma; but Dym met it sturdily.

"Will said it was a whim evidently that brought Mr. Chichester to St. Luke's; but he was glad of his help nevertheless, and they got on very well together. I don't think Mr. Chichester said much about himself in all these weeks, and it was only a guess of Will's that it was all excitement and restlessness that drove him to the work. I think he got it into his head that Mr. Chichester was not quite happy."

Dym was hardly wise in her excessive candor; for though Mrs. Chichester had evidently got the answer she expected, an expression of pain crossed her face; she took up some work, sighed, and laid it down again.

"There is no reason why my son should not be happy," she returned, rather proudly, as though something in Dym's

speech offended her. "Few men are blessed with more advantages. I suppose," speaking to herself, "spoilt children are always more or less capricious, and cry for the moon. The cleverer a man is, the more numerous his idiosyncrasies —don't you think so, Miss Elliott? I dare say even your brother has his whims."

Dym, who felt she had touched on delicate ground, and was justly rebuked, said, "Yes;" and then trusted the subject would be changed.

Dym had not been four-and-twenty hours in the house, yet already instinctively she felt that there would be danger in claiming any prior intimacy with Mr. Chichester, or in betraying familiarity with his pet hobbies. With all Mrs. Chichester's gentleness, there was a standoffishness and a tone of monopoly in all that concerned her son. He was evidently the object of her intense idolatry; but before many days were over Dym argued shrewdly that she guarded her mother's prerogative a little too jealously.

Her devotion to him was unselfish, but it lacked one element to insure perfection. Mrs. Chichester loved her son, and her affection was most warmly reciprocated; but she did not thoroughly understand him; in some moods she was even a little afraid of him.

Mother's love is not always exempt from this fear; some women glory in it. The oft-repeated story of the hen who rears a duckling and then sees her nursling take to the unknown element is true of many a mother. The young divinity she has worshiped from his infancy suddenly breaks loose from his swaddling-bands, abandons the leading-rein, puts aside the fond hand that restrained him, and breaks out into devious ways, or carves out new paths for himself away from the old landmarks. One can imagine the mother stretching out her hands across that unknown territory and praying him to return. Perchance the wind carries back some light mocking answer. Where is the child she has known? A few of these foolish hearts go on burning their candles and kneeling before their empty shrines. The wiser among them trim their household lamp and make the hearth-fire burn cheerily. By and by these young prodigals—these wanderers lost in their own mist—will come back, allured and cheered by the old lights, and condescend to be warmed by them.

"Faith as a grain of mustard-seed." What mother is there who needs not to possess that?

Dym had made a wrong calculation in repeating her brother's words; Mrs. Chichester still harped upon it.

"I hope you will never hint such a thing to any one else—your brother's suspicion, I mean," she went on this time rather appealingly. "My son deserves to be happy, if any one in this world ever does; he has excellent spirits—do not you think so, Miss Elliott?"

Dym eagerly answered that certainly Mr. Chichester had excellent spirits, and went on to add, with innocent hypocrisy, that no one ever made her laugh before.

Mrs. Chichester's brow cleared.

"His sallies of humor are so irresistible. Dear Guy! By the by, Miss Elliott, I hope you have carefully guarded the confidence I reposed in you; I would not for worlds have my son's suspicions aroused."

This affronted Dym.

"I never betray confidence, Mrs. Chichester," she returned, loftily; and her manner was so full of vexed dignity that Mrs. Chichester could not forbear a smile; they were finding out each other's angles already.

"You do not know how quick Guy is; a word dropped carelessly—a look, even—will tell him as much as a whole sentence. I only want to put you on your guard. Why, he even took alarm at my ready acquiescence with his wish to have you as my companion."

"Yes, he told me that," returned Dym half mollified; "he seemed to have anticipated some difficulty. Perhaps I ought to tell you, Mrs. Chichester, that he questioned me rather closely as to what was contained in your letter—if you had expressed yourself as failing, or anything of that sort."

"And you put him off the scent?"

"I tried, but I don't know whether I quite succeeded."

Mrs. Chichester sighed heavily. "Poor Guy!"

"Why do you distress yourself so, dear Mrs. Chichester?" cried the girl, impulsively, moved at last to sincere sympathy. "I know you do not wish to alarm your son needlessly, but if you cannot spare him pain in the end——"

"There is plenty of time," was the desponding answer; "there is no need for him to share this long suspense before-

hand. Remember, Miss Elliott, your lips are sealed on this subject till I unclose them."

"To him do you mean, or altogether? Perhaps," she went on, with a touch of womanliness quaint in one so young, "it may relieve you a little to talk out your fears to me;" then, very sweetly, "My own dear mother was blind before she died, Mrs. Chichester."

Mrs. Chichester shuddered, and then held out her hand to her young comforter, as though touched in spite of herself. Dym held it, and looked up anxiously in her eyes; they were large brown eyes, very beautiful in color and expression, but in one of them Dym fancied she could see a touch of filminess.

"If mamma had lived," she went on, "the doctors would have cured her. I have heard all about it; you don't know how easy it is; it is hardly an operation at all, it is so very simple."

Mrs. Chichester shook her head. "You cannot couch a cataract until it is formed. I know I am very silly to dread it so; perhaps, after all, the dread will be removed long before I shall need courage, for you know, Miss Elliott, I may have years to wait before that time comes."

"Yes, I know," returned Dym, softly; and then with a deep sigh Mrs. Chichester changed the subject.

CHAPTER IX.

WHO IS HONOR NETHECOTE?

DYM was very glad she had arrived at this happy understanding with Mrs. Chichester; for before luncheon was over Mr. Chichester gave her convincing proof that he already considered her as one of the family. She did not know that he had held weighty argument with his mother on this very subject.

"We must keep her in her place, Guy," Mrs. Chichester had said the night before Dym's arrival; "we must be kind to her, of course, and make her feel herself at home, poor girl;

but I don't think it will be for her ultimate happiness to lift her out of her proper position."

"What a painfully heavy remark, mother! addressed to me, too. Who wants to lift Miss Elliott out of her place?"

"No; but, Guy, it is necessary we should arrive at some sort of understanding: it will prevent awkwardness, and perhaps disappointment in the end."

"Very well, mother; she is your companion, not mine—remember that."

"You put things in such a strange light, Guy," returned Mrs. Chichester, "that there is no arguing with you. If Miss Elliott be my companion, I am afraid she is also in some sort your *protégée*. In her brother's house you could hardly help noticing her, and in some respects treating her as your equal."

"Is not a lady on terms of equality with any gentleman, mother?" demanded Guy, pointedly.

"My dear boy, I must entreat you not to get Quixotic. I am talking mere worldly wisdom to you now. Of course, if Miss Elliott be a sensible girl, as she must be, considering she is your hero's sister, she will soon see for herself that you hold a different position here from that you occupied in her brother's house; it would never do for any companion to be on terms of easy familiarity with the master of the house."

"Which means I am not to say a civil word, I suppose? Is that what you call being kind to her? O patronage, not frailty, thy name is woman."

"Guy, do not be absurd! I never knew one's own son could be so trying. Be civil, by all means; but as you insist on having her at all our family meals when we are alone, I should think it would be well to be a little careful, especially for the first few days; for," finished Mrs. Chichester, with a most praiseworthy solemnity, considering the incredulous smile on Guy's face, "I intend to begin as we are to go on."

"So do I," *sotto voce;* and then the squire stroked his beard and said "Pish!" and "Pshaw!" rather audibly. "Have you quite done, mother?"

Mrs. Chichester rose and shook her head.

"Oh, Guy, Guy, it is no use talking to you, I see, then."

"A willfu' man maun ha'e his way," in broad Scotch, "I suppose you mean. How long have you learnt such wisdom, *mère chérie?*" And, as proof that the argument was finished,

the squire politely handed his mother to the door and rang for coffee.

And the next day, when Mrs. Chichester was giving orders to Dorothy to meet Miss Elliott in the pony-carriage, the squire coolly put his head in at the door and announced his intention of meeting the train himself.

Mrs. Chichester had sufficient tact not to remonstrate. Probably by this time she had learnt her lesson, and knew it would be useless.

But her delicate and subtle woman's instinct scented trouble afar. Miss Elliott was very, very young, and painfully unsophisticated; and Guy's *bonhomie* bordered on radicalism; and though she knew her son was fancy-proof, one was never safe with these young girls, she thought: they were always taking fancies in their head, and thinking themselves badly used.

Which shows, as Mrs. Chichester had never had a companion in her life before, that this lady was not devoid of the astute wisdom generally assigned to the mothers of families.

She had her idol and her golden pedestal all complete, but she wanted to fence it round with palings of conventionalities, for fear unhallowed footsteps might approach too near.

It was all waste time and labor, for Mr. Chichester knew very well what he was about, and, being singularly without vanity, and as guileless in such things as a child, in spite of his shrewdness, was just the man who would do unwise things out of pure kindness.

He had his own notions how his *protégée* was to be treated at Ingleside, and, these notions being somewhat nice and Quixotic, there was fear that, unless his mother achieved the happy medium with respect to Miss Elliott, he might run into the other extreme, and overdo the thing, to make up for her coldness.

And all the time his conscience would be perfectly clear; for in spite of his sarcasms he was very anxious to draw the right line between Miss Elliott and himself, and, if truth must be told, he hardly thought on the subject at all till his mother brought it up, his mind being full of other things.

Kindness and generosity were Guy Chichester's chief characteristics: unfortunately, they were not always exercised with a due amount of prudence.

Herein lay the danger.

He was so kind to Dym, that Dym would have to learn for herself that he was kind to every one else.

And he was so used to be adored, that a little adoration, more or less, would hardly be noticed by him.

He met them at the dining-room door on the morning in question with a most reproachful face.

"Mother, where have you been? The gong has sounded just ten minutes—you will be late for the field. Miss Elliott not even dressed!"

Dym looked down abashed, feeling all of a sudden painfully conscious of her neat cambric, and doubtful in her own mind whether the sumptuary laws at Ingleside might not necessitate a fresh toilette for luncheon. Mrs. Chichester's next words dispelled this terrible fear.

"Nonsense, Guy; we have plenty of time; I am not dressed myself. Kate asked me to call for her about a quarter to three; there is not the slightest occasion for us to be on the field so early."

"I see, the whole court is to assemble at the vicarage gate and form into grand procession. I hear the Cheviots and Saunders are coming over from Harrogate, and the Harcourts from Knaresborough. I am glad you have stuck to the old *régime*—cold collation at seven instead of dinner."

"And mind you do not bring too many people, Guy," returned his mother, warningly: "this room will not hold over twenty comfortably."

"If the numbers are overwhelming, we can draft them off to the vicarage. Kate likes a crowd. I went over there this morning; such a fuss she was making. She had even turned Latimer out of his study. If I were a husband I should hate to confess I were henpecked. There were his papers all huddled together, and the poor man driven to play cricket with his boys in a shady corner of the field. There's one thing I admire about you, mother: you never make a fuss."

"Katherine is generally considered a good manager," returned Mrs. Chichester, by no means indifferent to this praise.

"Management ceases to be good when it is evolved with discomfort and noise," returned her son, somewhat dogmatically. "Can't you send Dorothy down there to help?—all the maids were running about and looking so fagged. Kate will be telling everybody this afternoon that she is so done up, and can

hardly stand. Such nonsense; and all, forsooth, because the London cousins are coming. How I do hate toadyism!"

"Guy, my dear," remonstrated Mrs. Chichester—her glance added, "we are not alone." But Guy, who was helping himself to pickles, coolly went on with his list of grievances.

"And there, in the midst of it, was little Grace Dunster, unpicking a dress of my lady's. I had up my lady, and talked to her seriously. I must own Kate had the grace to look ashamed of herself."

"Oh, Guy, when will you leave off meddling in other people's business? Fancy ordering off Kate's dressmaker!"

"She had no business to be working at the vicarage to-day, when the whole village has a general holiday; it is insubordination to the ruling powers. That's me!" striking his broad chest with his hand, and laughing at his mother's horrified face. "Katherine plays the gray mare in her own domains. All your dark-eyed women are shrews." And Dym was sure that twinkle was meant for her. "But I got the better of her. I told her slavery was abolished in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and sent off poor Grace to help Honor, who was alone with the men in the field."

"Well, that was sensible, Guy; better than your drudging at it yourself, as you did last year."

"Yes, wasn't it? I was only on the field from ten to one. My argument with Katherine occurred just before the gong sounded."

Mrs. Chichester's "Oh, indeed!" did not sound so well pleased.

"I am glad you don't call three hours' labor in the hot sun drudgery; it has made me pretty hungry, though. Miss Elliott, if you will not have any more cold beef, I advise you to go and put on that pink muslin."

The squire was issuing his own orders; but Dym kept her place, and colored distressfully, and her eyes asked him so plainly the reason of this mandate, that he laid down his knife and fork in surprise.

"What! have you not told her, mother? Miss Elliott goes with us, of course."

"Yes, of course," returned Mrs. Chichester. "I was only waiting till luncheon was over to tell Miss Elliott myself."

"Rather late in the day, is it not? Well, they say 'it is

never too late to mend.' All the same, I hope that pink muslin is ready." And, disregarding his mother's disapproving looks, he rattled on, "You see this is a gala day at Birstwith, and we all put on our go-to-meeting clothes, as Dame Ford expresses it. Why, my mother has even ordered me to wear a blue frock-coat for the occasion."

"What occasion?" timidly asked Dym.

If she had only another cool summer dress to wear instead of that pink muslin! Poor Dym, she was keenly alive to the impropriety of which the squire had been guilty in betraying such an intimate knowledge of her resources. She could not well explain to Mrs. Chichester that he had come upon her in the midst of her dressmaking labors; but she was aware how strange it must sound in her motherly ears.

"What occasion is it?" she asked, feeling all of a sudden that not even the salt of kindness can make the bread of dependence perfectly sweet.

"Dear, dear, Miss Elliott, twenty-four hours at Ingleside, and not know that this is our annual flower-show—our great fête-day! Mother, what have you and Miss Elliott been doing with yourselves all the morning? I'll be bound St. Luke, and not St. Jeremy, is at the bottom of it all. If you once launch Miss Elliott on the subject of St. Luke's, you are lost. I think I shall lay Kentish Town and Will Clericus under an interdict."

"You had better go and get ready, my dear," interrupted Mrs. Chichester's gentle voice.

Dym, whose ears were tingling with the squire's benevolent jests, made her escape from the room, but not before she caught the words, "Oh, Guy, Guy, you will spoil her!" spoken in a tone of remonstrance.

Dym had a feeling of uneasiness all the time she was dressing; even the crisp fresh folds of the renowned pink muslin, and the knowledge that it fitted exquisitely and that she looked unusually well, failed to give her pleasure. Morbidly sensitive, she felt sure there was a jar somewhere. Her nervousness was not lessened when she found Dorothy's movements had been quicker than hers, and that Mrs. Chichester had been ready for some minutes and was waiting in the porch. Dym's eyes took in an alarmed survey of pale-colored satin and black-lace drapery as she came up flushed and rustling and attempting to button her new gray gloves.

"There is no occasion for hurry; let me do that for you,—that is, if my clumsy fingers can manage it."

If the squire had done it on purpose, his politeness could not have provoked Dym more. She waxed hotter than ever as Mr. Chichester leisurely pulled at her glove; either the day was warm, or it was tighter than usual. Dym, who prided herself on her neat hand, and who could not afford many Paris kid gloves, looked on impatiently at the ruthless work of destruction.

"That will do. Ah! there, the seam has gone. Never mind, Mr. Chichester, please. I am keeping your mother waiting."

She half expected another dignified remonstrance from the porch.

"'Well enough is soon enough.' When will you women learn that? How are you to go all the afternoon with your glove unbuttoned? There, it is achieved at last. Never mind the rent. We may pick holes in ourselves, not in other people," remarked the squire, roguishly. "If you had stood still it would not have happened. There, run off."

Dym needed no second bidding. She barely waited to say, "Thank you." She glanced very timidly at Mrs. Chichester as she walked erect and silent down the shrubberies. "If we reach that iron gate without a word," she thought, "I shall be safe; but at the same time I shall catch it."

And Dym was right.

"My dear," began Mrs. Chichester—by and by, when Dym knew her better, she found out that Mrs. Chichester's voice was always the most gentle when a lecture was impending,—"my dear, I know it is very soon for me to speak, but I cannot help thinking the sooner the better, in this case: perhaps I may surprise you; but I do so wish to speak of your manner to my son."

If Mrs. Chichester had been perfectly just, she would have said, "of my son's manner to you." But Dym could be lectured where Guy would not brook a word.

"Madam!" interrupted Dym, blushing scarlet. If Mrs. Chichester had not been quite so gentle, she would have seen a rare specimen of Dym's temper; but gentleness and courtesy disarm wrath.

"My dear, you are so very young, and you have no

mother, you know," returned the elder lady, deprecatingly. "You must not mind if I give you hints now and then. Your former intimacy with my son doubtless warrants a great deal of familiarity; but though you have not been many hours with us, you must see for yourself that——" Mrs. Chichester hesitated a little—"things are different, in short, from what they were in Kentish Town."

Dym's only safety lay in silence; but what angry throbs there were under the pink dress! "I have not been here four-and-twenty hours, and in all that time I have not spoken a dozen words to Mr. Chichester; I have hardly looked at him," thought the girl, feeling injured and hurt in every fibre of her. Doubtless Mrs. Chichester was a little premature in her wisdom. Poor Dym was being made the scapegoat of the squire's transgression. Guy's luckless jokes, his journey to the station, the weight of that unfinished argument—all bore heavily on the innocent victim. But Dym was very young, and terribly imprudent. Perhaps, after all, Mrs. Chichester was wise in trying to make her understand the position of things without delay.

"You must not be hurt with me, my dear," she went on; "I only speak for your good." (Oh, Mrs. Chichester, fie for shame! Was not somebody else's good plainly involved?) "Pray do not misunderstand me: I want you to be good friends with both of us, and to feel perfectly at home. But could you not infuse a little more respect in your manner to my son? Don't you think in your position, my dear, you might address him as 'Sir'? It would sound a little less abrupt—do you not think so?" her tone quite appealing in its gentleness.

"Certainly, if you wish it," answered Dym's proud young voice.

"Thank you, my dear, I should like it. You are very good to give in to an old woman's fancy. When you know me a little, you will not mind my finding fault with you now and then, will you? Elder people have their peculiarities, and how are we to expect perfection at eighteen? Now we will say no more about it, and try and enjoy our flower-show." And Mrs. Chichester took the hand and the torn gray glove so pleasantly in hers, and looked so motherly and benignant with her placid face and white curls, that Dym's fit of wrath

evaporated; and, though she felt anything but invigorated by the bracing tonic of Mrs. Chichester's reproofs, she was disposed to think that perhaps she was right, though the squire, and not she, had been to blame, and that it behooved her to be very careful for the future.

It is a singular fact in religion and morals that with every good resolution there is a counter-temptation. The seed and the birds of the air do so fully illustrate this truth. When one's mind is most heavenly, fresh complications are sure to rise.

By the time they had reached the iron gate, Dym was certainly in a heavenly frame of mind; that is, in that devout and subdued state wherein mistakes are lamented and improvement promised. She was a little low, perhaps, which is not heavenly, and disposed to sit down and cry for Will. She looked up at the open church-door so longingly—for Birstwith church always stood open, so that the dwellers in the Happy Valley might literally go up to pray—that Mrs. Chichester, who felt sorry for the pain she had inflicted, proposed that Dym should look over the church while she went into the vicarage.

"I can give you a quarter of an hour, for we need not be on the field before then," she continued, kindly. And Dym took the quarter of an hour quite gratefully, and thanked her as though it were a gift.

Life is made up of trifles. A hackneyed phrase, but how true it is!

Dym was sitting in the deep stone porch, to collect her thoughts before going into the church, when a loud view-halloo from below made her raise her eyes, and there was the squire vaulting over the chain, spikes and all, at the bottom of the steps, and coming up them rapidly.

"One good turn deserves another," he shouted. "Have you a needle and thread, Miss Elliott? Look here, this comes of trying to clear a hedge in the plantations. Should have got off without a scratch but for Kelpie—the brute got between my legs." And the squire held out his arm to show how the silk lining had been torn away from the cuff of the blue frock-coat. "If you can't do it, I will just run over to Burgess, the tailor; only he is sure to be on the field."

Dym prodouced her little huswife without a word, and Mr. Chichester sat down beside her on the cool stone bench.

"What a delicious view one has here, and how nice and cool it is!" baring his head gratefully to the breeze. "Those white tents show very prettily among the trees, don't they, Miss Elliott?"

"They are very pretty, sir," biting off her thread with a little snap at the end of the last word. Mr. Chichester turned round, and eyed her sharply. Perhaps Dym did not like her work being so closely overlooked, for she certainly blushed up.

"How hot you look! Or is it the radiating beams from that pink dress? You ought to wear white, Miss Elliott; and your gloves—how I have torn them!—don't match. Well, and how do you get on with my mother? Is she kind, eh?"

Dym broke her thread, and apologized.

"Why, you are almost as clumsy as I am. Who would have thought it—with those little fingers too! I think I prefer a large benevolent-looking hand to a dimpled one. You oughtn't to bite your thread, Miss Elliott; it puts many a fee into the dentist's pocket. Well, you haven't answered my question."

"Mrs. Chichester is very kind, sir. I think—that is, I hope—we shall get on well together."

"I hope so too. There is a depressed tone of humility in your voice. What, breakers already!—temper *versus* philosophy. Well, if you are not more companionable to my mother than you are this afternoon—By the way, what makes you call me 'sir'?"

Dym did not snap her thread this time, but she sewed on as though her life depended on it. "Turn your wrist a little to the left, please, Mr. Chichester. I am afraid I am keeping you waiting a long time."

"For my answer—yes. Is there anything the matter, that you are so tongue-tied this afternoon?" Oh, if that quizzical voice would only be still!

"Yes—that is—no, sir; there is nothing the matter," stammered Dym.

"Yes, sir—no, sir. Are you metamorphosed into a schoolboy, Miss Elliott? I tell you flatly I won't have it."

No answer; only a rebellious little smile at one corner of Dym's mouth.

"This is some of my mother's doings. Ha, ha! I scent grogram. Come, Miss Elliott, confess; honor bright." Here he stopped, bit his lip angrily, and a dull red came into his forehead. "Pshaw, I did not mean that. Confess now, Miss Elliott, isn't my mother at the bottom of this?"

"She wishes it—that is—I think it only right, sir, considering my position."

"Don't I tell you I won't have it?" rather roughly. "You women make droll mistakes. I should have thought my mother's companion was a lady, and to be treated as one. Why don't you curtsy to me, Miss Elliott, as the village children do? or call me Sir Squire, as many of the country bumpkins do when they address me? There, I hope I have heard the last of such nonsense."

"But, Mr. Chichester, you forget that your mother's wishes are my law." Dym's mood was getting less heavenly; she wanted to argue it out.

But she soon found out who was master at Ingleside.

"Oh, you are obstinate, are you? There is only one way of treating such cases. As I don't choose William Elliott's sister to address me in this manner, I shall never answer when you call me 'sir,' and if you persist in such folly, I shall drop conversation altogether." And Dym, whose work was ended, and who was sitting with folded hands, actually saw a flash in Guy Chichester's eyes.

"But your mother?" she faltered, as he rose and took up his hat.

"Leave my mother to me, please." Perhaps he repented of the fierceness, for he broke into a smile directly afterwards, and Guy Chichester's smile was very sunny. "Well, thank you for your neat handiwork, Miss Elliott. Now I think we had better be going."

As he was evidently waiting for her, Dym obeyed, though with some trepidation; but, as she phrased it afterwards, her ill luck was in the ascendant. Just as Mr. Chichester was unfastening the chain at the bottom of the steps, a bevy of people came out of the vicarage gate. In another minute they were in the midst of them.

"Well, squire, we are only waiting for you."

"Guy, what were you doing in the church porch?"

Guy turned to his shy companion with a droll mixture of

fun and gravity. "See what it is to be a person of importance, Miss Elliott: Was it not the great Julius Cæsar who said, 'It is better to be first in a village than second in Rome?' I suppose you don't know the happiness of having all your actions canvassed. How do you do, Lady Marsden? Miss Patty, this is your first visit to Birstwith, I believe. Mrs. Trevor, your humble servant. My dear mother, for fear you die of curiosity, which occurrence will assuredly damp the fête, I will explain that, having torn the silk lining of my coat-sleeve, and seeing Miss Elliott in the porch, I made my way to her, having a curious sort of fancy that women and needles and thread are synonymous terms: hence the result."

"Oh, Mr. Chichester, you are always so droll," laughed Miss Patty.

Dym timidly made her way to Mrs. Chichester, and was rewarded for her effort by being welcomed with a benign smile and kindly introduced to the vicar and his wife.

"This is my new companion, Kate. Latimer, this is Miss Elliott—the young lady I spoke to you about."

They both bowed, but Mrs. Fortescue looked at her curiously.

"Rather a young companion, is she not, Aunt Constance?" with a smile meant to be winning, but Dym thought there was something peculiar in her tone. Dym had plenty of graphic power; she reproduced the whole of the group afterwards for Will's benefit, adding droll little touches of her own. Will, as he read her description, felt as though he could see it all exactly. The gray vicarage, covered with climbing roses; the church, and the long green meadow, touched with sunlight and dotted with white tents; the vicar, standing tall and slim, with long fair beard, and just a touch of Puseyism in the cut of his coat, "looking very clerical, very proper, and just as a Latimer Fortescue ought to look," put in Dym, with one of her sly hits. "One could imagine him doing everything but play cricket with his boys—two such bonnie sturdy little rogues in gray Highland costume. I don't think Mrs. Fortescue—that is, Cousin Katherine—a bit pretty," wrote Dym; "but she has dark eyes, and an oval face, and looks very elegant. She wore quite a serpentine train of white muslin. I watched her all the afternoon, and I cannot think how she managed all those limp-looking folds. With her long neck

and slow movements, and all that whiteness, she looked just like a swan. She does it beautifully, but I think she must have been studying it for years," went on naughty Dym. "And every now and then she wakes up from her languor, and is as brisk as possible. I know now what Mr. Chichester meant by her management."

And then she went on to describe the London cousins. Lady Marsden, a pretty clever widow, looking almost as young as her own daughter; and Miss Patty, with her voluble chatter and incessant questions; and a young cub of an undergraduate brother, "against whom no one must breathe a word," because he is Sir George Marsden, of Marsden Court; and Mrs. Trevor, a fine young woman, but so over-dressed that Dym at once said she must be a farmer's daughter, which was the truth; and her husband, a stout placid young man, looking very much the farmer too, and as unlike as possible to the lawyer he really was.

After that they formed into procession, the squire heading the van with Lady Marsden.

Dym followed slowly in their wake. They went first into the large central tent, which was devoted chiefly to the produce of the hot-houses and conservatories of the Great House and vicarage: here the fruit and flowers were really very beautiful. The other tent was less imposing, but far more interesting, as it contained merely the product of cottage gardens and windows—small plates of homely vegetables, glass cases of honeycomb, piled-up heaps of fruit, and big nosegays, or "bow-pots," as the villagers called them, this word defining excellently the gaudy pyramids of color, banked up with green, that were disposed with more liberality than taste on the well-scoured wooden tables.

"This is not Honor's handiwork," Dym heard Mrs. Chichester say; and the squire, who seemed to hear everything, answered——

"Honor had enough to do with the large tent and the refreshment booth. I made her leave this to the boys and Grace Dunster. As usual, we had a dispute over it. She has vowed she will tell every one on the ground that it is my fault."

"You deserve to be punished for your interference, Guy," was the quiet answer. "You know the Nethecotes manage all these things. You had no business to be on the field at all."

"When Greek meets Greek, great is the tug of war. Fancy the ruling powers falling out between themselves. I think little Grace Dunster thought we were in earnest. Mother, there are the Fotheringays. Your court is getting too large; we had better adjourn to the other tent."

"Who is this Honor Nethecote every one seems talking about?" whispered Miss Patty to Miss Trevor.

"She is Mr. Nethecote's sister. That is he in the tweed coat and straw hat, just speaking to the squire." Here some one trod on Dym's dress, and she lost the rest of the answer; but as she followed on more slowly, she found herself echoing Miss Patty's words,—

"Who is Honor Nethecote?"

CHAPTER X.

NIDDERDALE COTTAGE.

"WHO is Honor Nethecote?"

Dym's curiosity began to feel aggravated by the constant recurrence of this name. Who could this mysterious individual be, who seemed to be the presiding spirit of the day, so that nothing could be done without her supervision? Was she young or old? If she were Humphrey's sister, was she plain and freckled as he was? Dym wondered. There is nothing like a mystery to excite interest. An unconscious fascination impelled Dym to every spot where Honor Nethecote's name was mentioned: it seemed to be on the lips of every one, rich or poor.

"Honor's taste—how beautiful!" from Mrs. Trevor. "Miss Nethecote—ah, she promised Doll her fuchsia should be put in a good place." The latter *sotto voce* from a lame, sickly-looking girl, who with one crutch was trying to push her way through a throng of merry-faced lasses. "Ah, where's Phil, I wonder?" with a patient sort of sigh that excited Dym's compassion.

"You are tired: can I help you to find your friends? It

must be very fatiguing to you in this hot tent and with all this crowd," says Dym, in her pleasant voice.

"It is only Doll's fuchsia, thank you. Ah! there it is! I can see it over those heads."

"You had better see it closer," returned Dym, kindly. She pilots a way for the lame girl, and stations her very carefully where she can get a good view of the precious flower. She has no idea that this is the object of Guy Chichester's chivalry this morning—the lame dressmaker, Grace Dunster. Grace looks up with sparkling eyes. "Isn't it beautiful! I wish Doll could see how well it looks. If it had been a child we couldn't have tended it more. Phil used to wash its leaves and count the buds every morning. I think the squire will be pleased with it. Phil will carry it up when the show is over."

"Is it a present for the squire?" asks Dym, with a winning look. She hears all about it presently, when she and Grace are sitting together on a shady seat on a hillock under some trees. The bands tune up as briskly as though they were in the Cheltenham or Montpellier Gardens. Mrs. Chichester and her court have retired to the coolest tent; the villagers are beginning to come in, in knots of twos and threes. Dym sees Phyllis walking with her fellow-servants from the Hall. Mistress Dorothy, in her black silk and Paisley shawl, curtsies primly as she passes the hillock where Dym and her lame companion sit.

"I should like to hear all about it, Grace," says Dym, settling herself comfortably against the tree-trunk; and Grace, nothing loath, complies.

It was a long story, but Dym did not weary of it—possibly because it reminded her of Will's, wherein Mr. Chichester was ever the hero; without doubt he was Grace's hero. The little dressmaker's eyes filled with tears when she spoke of his generosity and goodness.

Grace Dunster lived over Burgess the tailor's; she had two little rooms there, which she called home. But she did not live alone; she had two young sisters, whom she had to maintain with her needle.

Grace did not dwell much on their poverty and struggles—it was not for naught that Grace Dunster had that sweet earnest face; patience and endurance were written in every

feature of it—but she spoke of Doll, who had epileptic fits, and would not live to be a woman; and Phil, who turned out to be a girl; "who is very rough, but homely, miss, and scours and cleans up so nicely, and helps me with a white seam when her lessons are done and the other girls are at play.'

And then Grace related, but very briefly, how her foot had been bad from a child, and how it grew worse and worse, "till the bone seemed on fire with pain;" and Grace worked on by day, and cried herself to sleep at night, but softly, so as not to wake Phil; and how her face grew pale and pinched-like with the constant trouble of it, and folks said she would go into a consumption and die; and then how this came about to the squire's ears, and one day, when Grace was sitting alone sobbing a bit over her work—just for relief's sake—the squire and Miss Nethecote came in together, and were both of them so kind, and the squire asked her if she would be a good brave girl, and do what he told her; and when she said "Yes," but very wanderingly, he told her that Miss Nethecote had offered to take Phil and Doll home to Nidderdale Cottage and promised her old servant should look after Doll, but that he was going to send Grace down to a grand London hospital, where the cleverest doctors in the world would see her poor foot, and tell her what must be done to it; and when Grace cried, though it was only out of pure gratitude and joy like, "at being so thought of, miss," he promised there and then that he would come up to London and see her.

And he kept his word, and came twice or thrice into the great hospital ward when the amputation was over and Grace was relieved of her life-long burden; nay, more, when the doctor said it would be long before she would be strong and fit for work again, he sent her to another beautiful hospital built somewhere on the seashore, where for six happy weeks Grace could see the waves rippling over the sand, and drink in health with the sweet sea-breezes.

Nor did his kindness end there; "for if he did not meet me himself at the station and bring me home in his fine open carrriage, which will hold eight comfortable, miss; and there I found Phil and Doll and Miss Nethecote, and the tea-table all dressed up with flowers, just as though it were a school feast. Why, it is making you cry, miss, I declare!"

Dym did actually brush away a tear. The narrative, simple as it was, moved her to tearful interest. What a great benevolent heart it must be that could interest itself in the trouble of a poor seamstress! Other men were doubtless as generous as Mr. Chichester; many a one would have sent the poor little sufferer to the London hospital, and, perhaps, even to the convalescent home—the lives of rich men abound in such deeds of largesse and almsgiving—but who among these Dives in purple would have troubled themselves with even a thought of the girl lying lonely and home-sick in her distant ward, pining for news of Doll and Phil, and ready to cry her eyes out with joy over the beautiful letter Miss Nethecote had sent, inclosing a note in round hand from Phil? and who but the squire would have brought his carriage round to the station door and himself supported poor little Grace's tottering steps down those dreadful stone stairs? But the climax of the story, the flower-decked table, brought her back to the old grievance: "Who was Miss Nethecote?" And she was about to put some leading question to Grace, when Mr. Nethecote himself appeared at the foot of the hillock.

He doffed his straw hat, and looked so hard at Dym that she felt frightened. She found out afterwards that he was very short-sighted.

"Miss Elliott—ah, Grace, how d'ye do? In pleasant company, I see—Miss Elliott, the squire wants you to come down to the tent and have some refreshment, before it is too hot and crowded."

He had not forgotten her, then? Dym looked pleased, but returned rather diffidently that she would rather stay where she was, unless Mrs. Chichester wanted her.

"Madam doesn't want you," returned Mr. Nethecote, brusquely: "there's a regular bevy of dowagers in there," nodding contemptuously to the tent below. "'See the conquering Hero comes,' that's out of compliment to you, squire," as Guy Chichester's broad shoulders appeared below. "Here is a rebel for you! Miss Elliott won't obey orders—rather stop where she is."

Mr. Chichester looked up and smiled. "As though you can expect anything but contradiction from a woman, Humphrey," in a tone of unusual benevolence. "Can't you bring her and Grace something good up there? Miss Elliott, I think after

all you put on that pink gown for effect—you are so determined to show it. Halloo, Berwick, what are you after?" as the boy rushed past him, panting and breathless.

"I am only going to the house to fetch my wickets and bat, Cousin Guy; those fellows up there want to get up a game of cricket. Well, what now, squire?" as Guy coolly took him by the shoulders and marched him off in a different direction, to where a knot of boys were assembled.

"I say, you boys, who proposed cricket?"

The squire's tone was so awful that consternation and silence prevailed, till a small boy said, "Burgess, sir;" and was instantly hustled to the front.

"Who was that who peached on the other? Tim Rydell? Tim, I pity your father. I wouldn't be the father of a sneak. Burgess, stand forward."

"Yes, squire."

A sturdy curly-haired boy planted himself before the squire, grinning from ear to ear.

"You are the culprit, Ned, are you?'

"Yes, squire," perfectly unabashed by the publicity of the rebuke.

"You are the boy who seduced stilts and monkeys into this ground, and now you propose cricket."

"Well, we tossed up heads and tails, and cricket came down heads; and Brooks said dancing was slow, and we couldn't manage prisoner's base, and Master Burke he offered to fetch his bat and things; and it is such a nice smooth bit of land, squire," finished Ned, in a wheedling tone.

"You are a nice set of scamps, you are! Do you think cricket-balls are sugar-plums, that they can be allowed among the tents and dresses? Do you want Miss Nethecote to act long-stop, as she did last year, when a ball from your bowling, Burgess, nearly knocked down Grace Dunster? Did I not interdict cricket then and there? What do you mean by such gross disobedience? Berwick, I am ashamed of you!"

"Please, Cousin Guy——"

"Please, squire"—a chorus of "Oh, sir!"

"Not a word. I hate insubordination. Boys, you all know me—that I will be minded. Berwick, you deserve a thrashing; only your mother would never forgive me; nevertheless, you and Burgess, as ringleaders, must quickly march off the

field; and you may take that little sneak Tim Rydell with you. Come, be off with you!"

"Nay, nay, I'll go bail for them, squire," in Humphrey Nethecote's tones.

"No bail!" was the severe answer.

"Boys, come to me; I will take you under my protection. Mr. Chichester, you cannot refuse a favor to a lady—please grant a general amnesty and pardon the ringleaders."

"Too bad, Miss Nethecote—you have always a trick of turning up when you are not wanted. I am not in a mood for forgiveness."

Dym peeped forward, but there was such a crowd round the squire and the boys that, in spite of her elevated position, it was impossible to see clearly; there were several ladies standing near, all strangers to Dym, but the voice did not belong to them; it evidently proceeded from one of the tent-doors.

"In spite of your remarks, justice must be tempered with mercy. Boys, make your apology to the squire, and promise to do better for the future."

"We are sorry, sir." "I wish I had knocked my head against a wall before I proposed it," added Ned, remorsefully; and "Cousin Guy, I'll just carry my bat back," from Berwick.

"Well, is Justice appeased, Mr. Chichester?"

"Oh, go your ways, boys," was the squire's somewhat irritated answer; "next time, when Miss Nethecote is not by to beg you off, I'll thrash the whole lot of you." This terrible threat was received with a shout of laughter; and the crowd merrily dispersed.

"Got her innings as usual," muttered Mr. Chichester, as he went back to rejoin the ladies; and Humphrey Nethecote came back to Dym with the good things he had provided for her and Grace.

"Which was Miss Nethecote?" she asked, leaning eagerly forward; but Humphrey, who was assisting Grace, did not hear her question. By and by, when they had finished, and Grace, having sighted Phil from below, had hastily adjusted her crutch and gone down in search of her, this singular individual came and stationed himself against the tree-trunk.

"Don't let me detain you. I mean, there is plenty of room to sit down," Dym hastily added, fearing she had been rude.

"Eh, what? I am afraid I did not hear you. Oh, there

is no occasion for me to go down just yet; and the squire asked me particularly to look after you."

"He is very kind," answered Dym, in a low voice.

"Kind! Ah, the squire's always kind, except to those boys just now. Ah, Honor had him there. I told Honor once that the squire ought to be a Jew; he is so careful to carry out that bit of the Mosaic law about the widow, the fatherless, and the stranger. I should think you found that out at St. Luke's, didn't you?" with an interrogative glance.

Dym wondered what Mr. Nethecote would have thought if he had heard the story of Ned Smithers. Not but what it was all of a piece with Grace Dunster's hero. Will had done well to warn her against hero-worship. She assented very quietly to Mr. Nethecote's questions. To tell the truth, the worthy Yorkshireman somewhat bored Dym, who was a very lively little creature; he had spoiled her *tête-à-tête* with Grace; and she made up her mind with Dymphna-like obstinacy that if his sister were like him she must be very plain indeed.

"That was a queer idea of the squire's, taking up his residence in Kentish Town, wasn't it?" went on Humphrey, in his gruff good-natured voice. "There's no notion what a man may do when he is once off his balance. I dare say, if your brother were here, he could tell us plenty of amusing anecdotes. No matter where he goes or what he does, our squire is sure to be talked about."

Dym, who was very shrewd, gathered three things from this speech—first, to quote common parlance, "that there was a screw loose somewhere;" but this was no news to her. Only the expression "off his balance" set her thinking whether Mr. Chichester might be somewhat wrong in his head; but after a minute she rejected this idea with disdain: the very thought was disloyal to her hero. Next she discovered that this worthy Humphrey was bitten with the same enthusiasm, and that in some sort of way he was a sturdy matter-of-fact prop to the erratic genius of Guy Chichester.

"Ho, ho! so the squire has his Mentor too," she thought, gleefully; but in this respect she was wrong. Humphrey Nethecote was not Guy Chichester's Mentor.

On the contrary; she found out afterwards, though Humphrey in his canine-like fidelity would have laid down his life

for his friend, he did not possess the slightest power or influence over the squire: his next speech proved the truth of this.

"Eh, it was an odd idea," he continued, musingly. "Perhaps I am a little old-fashioned in my notions—Honor says I am—but I never can see the sense of a man kicking over the traces. That's the squire's fault; he gets the bit between his teeth, a wrong idea in his head, and he bolts off with it. Why, if he had stuck to my advice—which he never does, bless you!—he would have just taken the home farm off my shoulders, and worked all those new-fangled ideas of his. But no; he must be off to Kentish Town, and teaching ragged boys in the night-school, and doing goodness knows what besides; and, for all I can say, Honor only laughs at him."

Evidently Mr. Nethecote thought that Mr. Elliott's sister would be pretty conversant with the squire's vagaries. She hardly knew what answer to make to this strange confidence; and, afraid of saying too much, she merely asked, "Is Honor your sister?" which was a little bit of hypocrisy on her part.

"What's to do now?" he returned, looking at her in surprise. "Of course Honor Nethecote must be my sister—my half-sister, I should say, for the same mother couldn't have the pair of us."

"Then she is not like you?"

Humphrey Nethecote wrinkled up his light eyebrows; and light eyebrows on a freckled face are no beauty.

"Coom, coom, Miss Elliott, you are trying your fu-un on me;" for Mr. Nethecote's speech was very broad. "I must tell the Duchess that—like me, indeed!" And Mr. Nethecote laughed heartily.

"How was I to know?" returned Dym, a little pertly. "I have not seen your sister."

"Do you know what a farmer once said to her? 'Thee art t' tightest lass, Miss Nethecote,' he said, 'not only in the West Riding, but in the whole of Yorkshire; and I'd drive a hard bargain to buy thee if thy cheeks were but a verra little bit redder.' How the squire laughed, and advised Honor to rub her cheeks!"

Dym was very perplexed, but she began to like honest Humphrey in spite of herself.

"Honor would have been up at the Great House to see you this morning," he continued, "but for the bustle of this flower-show. It is early days to ask you, but I suppose Madam, as we call her, is very kind to you?"

"Very; but I like the squire best," returned Dym, with the fearlessness, but hardly the reticence, of eighteen. Humphrey gave a low prolonged whistle, and stared at her; but Dym's piquant, innocent little face evidently disarmed him, and he broke into a candid smile.

"Ah, everybody's alike, high and low, rich and poor, man or woman. I believe there's the bell for the prizes—see how the people are crowding in. Shall I elbow you a passage, Miss Elliott, or do you prefer the fresh air outside?"

"Yes, yes; don't wait for me, please—I know you are wanted." And, afraid of monopolizing him, Dym ran down the tiny slope and wandered about the field by herself rather aimlessly, thinking every now and then that even that stupid Humphrey was better company than none; and, keenly alive to the discomfort of being alone in a crowd, before many minutes were over she was ready to envy Phyllis, who was walking with a trim-looking lad, evidently a mechanic by his dres.

Phyllis blushed and curtsied in answer to Dym's nod; and then Dym came upon Grace Dunster sitting in a shady nook with a shock-headed girl in a flaming red frock and white pinafore, evidently Phil, but both looked so happy that she would not disturb them, and wandered on disconsolately till she found an empty seat near a stand of exotics; there were very few people about, and in watching them Dym got drowsy, and nearly went to sleep.

She really was dreaming, or something like it; for she opened her eyes and said, "Will!" when a hand was laid on her shoulder.

"Will! no such luck. Here, I've found her asleep, I do declare!" cried Guy Chichester's cheery voice; at which Dym was wide awake in a moment. "Here, Honor, come and take this child home with you, and give her some tea; my mother will not want her—we have twenty to thirty people up at the house."

"Very well," assented a quiet voice behind her.

Dym turned quickly round, and at last found herself face to face with the owner of it.

And her first impression was that Miss Nethecote was the most singular person she had ever met, and her next that she was the most beautiful woman she had ever seen in her life. And this opinion was confirmed when she saw her in her own home, when the shady hat no longer concealed the broad white forehead and wide-open gray eyes. The Yorkshire farmer was right: Miss Nethecote was very pale, but the shape of the face was perfect; and Dym had never before seen that peculiar shade of brown hair which looks as though the sun were always shining on it.

The singularity, after all, lay chiefly in her dress: in spite of the warmth of the evening and the festivity of the occasion, Miss Nethecote wore a dark-blue cashmere dress, fitting almost as closely as a riding-habit, and a low riding hat and feathers. "Very well," was all she said; but the pleasantness of her smile made up for the brevity of her greeting, and she held out her hand to Dym. It was ungloved, and even in that moment of soft pressure a vivid remembrance of Mr. Chichester's words in the porch rushed to her memory. He had said he "liked a large benevolent-looking hand." Here it was; woman's hand as it was, Dym's lithe little fingers seemed quite lost in it.

Strange that that first moment of greeting should bring pain to Dym! Might it not be ominous of the strange power and fascination that, in spite of all her efforts, Honor Nethecote was to exercise over our little heroine? For as time went on Dym could have wished she had never seen Honor Nethecote's face; while all the while she loved and cleaved to her, as women have loved and cleaved since the days of Ruth the Moabitess.

Miss Nethecote, after her brief word of assent, seemed to think further delay unnecessary, for she turned aside as though to lead the way, but Mr. Chichester stopped her.

"If I were you, I would take the short cut across the fields. She seems very tired. I will make it all right with my mother."

Miss Nethecote nodded. "Come, Miss Elliott."

"Good-night, Honor," looking wistfully after them.

"Good-night, squire," with a nonchalant wave of her hand, without turning her head. "Don't forget mercy when you are dealing with justice next time."

Dym, who felt, lamb-like, that she was going to be sacrificed to a fresh whim, and was not quite easy in her mind as to what Mrs. Chichester would say to this proceeding, could not help looking around as they walked on. Mr. Chichester was still standing in the tent-door, shading his eyes and watching them. They were crossing on the unfrequented part of the field. "Can you climb a fence?" asked Miss Nethecote, abruptly. Here was a new inconsistency: fancy this tall magnificent-looking woman climbing a fence! But, to Dym's surprise, she achieved it far more lightly than even Dym herself.

"I hope you are not afraid of bulls," was the next observation; to which Dym, without any hesitation, replied that she was very, very much afraid of them, and that if Miss Nethecote would allow her, she would rather go back; and so on.

This brought matters to a stand-still; and Miss Nethecote walked on for a minute, as though gravely considering the position of affairs.

"If we go back through the village and round by the Mill, it will make the difference of more than three-quarters of a mile, and Mr. Chichester says you are very tired. So am I," she added, seeing Dym was ready to disclaim this eagerly. "Mr. Trevor's cattle will certainly be out in the field—I passed them this afternoon; but old Cerberus, his black bull, was not among them. Yes," she continued with the decision of a general who had just reviewed his forces and had made up his mind to do battle—"yes, I think we can venture. If you are afraid, you shall take the side nearest the hedge. I'll promise you for your comfort, Miss Elliott, that I will be thoroughly tossed before I will let them touch you."

All this was very terrible to Dym; but there was a "no appeal" sort of tone in Miss Nethecote's voice which made her think an argument would be fruitless. Evidently there was more than one strong will in Birstwith. A consciousness of not wishing to be laughed at made her determined to go through with it. She quaked visibly, though, when they came to the meadow, and found it full of moving black bodies and formidable horns; though Miss Nethecote pretended not to see it. "Fortune favors the brave," they say. There was no awful catastrophe or hair-breadth escape of two females down in the "Pateley Bridge, Nidderdale, and Ripon Herald" that week. Tossing and goring may be Taurus-like qualities; but Squire

Trevor's cattle preferred quietly ruminating and whisking off flies to any such amusement, and only one sound resembling a bellow made Dym's heart beat more quickly.

"There, the danger is over: as usual, anticipation is worse than reality. But I know what our black cattle are to a Londoner's eyes. You would have good nerve, Miss Elliott, if you had not a trick of turning so pale. In six months you will think nothing of going through these fields alone."

"Never!" was the vehement rejoinder. "Why, how far you live from the village, Miss Nethecote!"

"By choice, and not from necessity," was the somewhat singular reply; and, as Dym looked surprised, "Before Mr. Trevor came to Birstwith, my brother wished very much to take his house; but I told him it was far too near the Great House and the vicarage, and he gave it up, though it was larger and more convenient for him, poor fellow! But I could not tolerate living in the village."

"Mr. Chichester seems to like it."

"Oh, the squire! He is no criterion. In spite of his liking, he takes care to relieve it often enough of his presence. If one were a man, able to go to London, Paris, or Rome, or even to Kentish Town, when one wished, it might be different; but a woman is such a cooped-up creature," with a sigh ending in a smile. "Why, I should be obliged to stop in from week's end to week's end, and repent in dust and ashes whenever I add a fresh trimming to my dress or get a new bonnet. I have left off dressing in Birstwith."

Dym was getting new lights now. "You mean that every one notices what you have on and talks about it. I have heard it is always the case in villages."

"Oh, the talk would not hurt me. I never hear gossip. It is the base imitation of the real article that tries my woman's soul. Never believe a woman is above this weakness, Miss Elliott; it is a libel on our sex. All the good women in the Bible were fond of dress. Oh, I am no Puritan, not I!"

"I think it is too bad to copy fashions," exclaimed Dym, who was enjoying this thoroughly feminine conversation.

"Do you? You have a pink bonnet on to-day. Yes; it is very pretty—inexpensively trimmed, too; it will just come within the means of Phyllis and her sisters; unless, not being Mrs. Fortescue's or Miss Nethecote's, it is not fashionable

enough for them." Then, as Dym laughed, "I assure you once, Miss Elliott, I wore a gray silk—I adore gray silk. The following Sunday—no, the next but one—half the church was in gray. I was not in a devout mood, and I counted fifteen, in all materials, from gray rep and poplin down to mousseline de laine and gray duffle. Absurd, was it not?" as Dym laughed. "Now you may form some sort of conjecture why I dislike living in a village. One may wear out Birstwith patience by adhering closely to one costume; but in other ways how is Birstwith's curiosity to be baffled?"

Miss Nethecote had a slow, musing way of talking occasionally, but she looked up now, and spoke more quickly.

"Ah, there's our house—Nidderdale House, or Cottage, we call it. You can see the low gray roof shining through the trees."

"And that other one?" asked Dym, pointing to a building a little farther down the road.

"That is Woodside, where Mr. Grey, the doctor, lives. It is a little out of the way for his practice, but there was no house vacant in the village. His wife is a sad invalid. I have been sitting with her nearly all the afternoon, gossiping and playing with her babies."

"Do you like her? Is she nice?" For Dym had a laudable desire to learn all she could of her future neighbors.

"Yes, I like her very much; she is the nicest woman in Birstwith," was the frank rejoinder.

"What, nicer than Mrs. Chichester?" But Dym was sorry for her thoughtless remark afterwards. A slight, almost imperceptible, change came over Miss Nethecote's fine face; but when Dym looked again it was gone. Possibly Miss Nethecote thought honesty was the best policy, for her answer was very straightforward.

"Well, perhaps I am not a very fair judge. I like Mrs. Chichester extremely, but then we never can get on together. When two women have two such wills, it would be wonderful if they were not to clash sometimes. Don't you like a thoroughly helpless woman?"

"No," returned Dym, promptly, finding it was necessary to assert her own individuality; "not at all."

"That is because you are helpless yourself. What," as Dym seemed bent on defending herself, "don't you like to lean

all your weight on somebody? Is not it 'Will, Will!' from morning to night? You see, a little bird tells me all manner of things, Miss Elliott. One of these days it will not be 'Will,' but somebody else."

"I am sure I shall not like Mrs. Grey," returned Dym, viciously. What was the use of asserting herself? Already she was worsted in her argument. Of course she was helpless, and she knew it; but Miss Nethecote need not have found it out so soon: she was as bad as, or even worse than, the squire himself.

"You are deciding on poor evidence. If we were not both so tired, I would take you on to Woodside and make you retract your words before tea. As it is, I will content myself with observing that Esther Grey is the sweetest woman and the worst wife I ever saw; if she were not such a good mother, I might declare her unredeemable."

"My mind refuses to admit such an inconsistency, Miss Nethecote."

"You are afraid you spoke prematurely. Pray don't go to Mrs. Fortescue for her opinion of my favorite; she says Esther is a wretched manager, and that Mr. Grey has a sad time of it with an ailing wife, six children, and small means; and perhaps she is right. Well, we all have our faults; it is *peccavi* with most of us. Now, is this not a pretty corner?"

They had crossed the last field, and had come out on a little patch of white road shaded with trees, and with a trout-stream flowing beside it. Beyond lay a picturesque piece of broken grass-land, resembling a miniature common.

"The air is fresher and more bracing up here than if we lived lower down in the valley. Well, welcome to Nidderdale Cottage, Miss Elliott;" and, unlocking a door in the wall, Dym found herself in a pleasant garden—half garden, half orchard—with a trim little lawn and straggling walks, bordered with apple-trees, and a long gray cottage, with a bow-window, the porch quite smothered with honeysuckle and roses.

"What a dear place!" cried Dym. There was a bubble and trickle of water everywhere; on the lawn was a bed of creamy tea-roses; in every corner, and even through the trees, gleamed tall turk's-cap lilies; a sweetbrier hedge steeped the evening air with fragrance; some doves cooed from the roof. "How

sweet and still it all is! Of course it is not so grand, but it is prettier far than Ingleside."

"Oh, don't speak against Ingleside! I love it," returned Miss Nethecote, rather contradictively. "Yes, it is pretty enough, and Humphrey takes great pains with it. But if women have cages, I should like mine to be a gilded one. The rooms are not high or large enough for my taste. But all the same," continued this singular being, "I suppose I shall live and die here."

Dym made no answer. To her Nidderdale Cottage appeared a perfect Paradise. The rooms were not large, certainly, and were evidently few in number, but they were furnished with exquisite taste, and in perfect accordance with the cottage-like exterior. The principal sitting-room—Miss Nethecote corrected her when she said drawing-room—was fitted up with gray damask, and had rose hangings; and Honor's room was full of beautiful things—Parian statuettes, Swiss carvings, a kneeling figure in Genoese marble, and Roman mosaics were prettily grouped on table and bracket. After all, as Dym thought, there was no lack of gilding in Miss Nethecote's cage. Guy Chichester had said that whatever Humphrey Nethecote touched turned to gold. It certainly seemed as though it were his hobby to lavish pretty things on his sister. In spite of the low ceiling and latticed windows, she thought that there was not a room in Ingleside more to her taste than Honor's bower.

It made her think more highly of Mr. Nethecote; and she was rather disappointed when Honor, in her matter-of-fact way, remarked that they had newly furnished the house last year, when some money had come to her, but that the statuettes and Swiss carvings had been given her by a friend.

"How nice to have such a friend," ejaculated Dym, in the innocence of her heart.

"Very," returned Miss Nethecote, dryly, "especially as I hate gifts, and the friend knows that I do. Miss Elliott, if you are ready, shall we go down-stairs? Humphrey will be on the field till nine o'clock, but he will be home in time to walk back to Ingleside with you."

What a pleasant evening that was! Dym put down her first visit to Nidderdale Cottage as one of her red-letter days. She had never before enjoyed the society of an intellectual, thor-

oughly womanly woman; for, with all her eccentricities, Miss Nethecote was certainly that.

They grew very confidential over the cosy little meal, which was laid out in the bow-window of a tiny room looking over the trout-stream and the meadow; the grass ran up to the very window; one stepped over the ledge on to the green soft carpet. There was a group of alder-trees at one end, and two beautiful Alderneys, as unlike as possible to Squire Trevor's cattle, were quietly chewing the cud under their shade; a row of bee-hives stood near the house; a flock of white geese were stretching out their long necks and flapping their wings noisily.

"How beautiful!" observed Dym, with something like a sigh.

"Yes, if only cows and grass could fill one's life," repeated Miss Nethecote, with a dreamy smile. She had dropped the slight brusquerie that Dym had noticed—for people said Miss Nethecote could be brusque sometimes, and they were right; she sat opposite Dym, with grand white forehead and bright candid eyes, looking so fair and good that Dym caught herself wondering what Will would think of her, and if she would be right in electing Miss Nethecote as her heroine.

Dym's straightforward little soul was charmed with the largeness and simplicity of Honor's nature. With all her reticence, she could be as frank and outspoken as Dym herself.

Her answers always went straight to the point. Honor was always ready with her yea, yea, and her nay, nay, when other people would have hesitated or equivocated. She was perfectly honest—people said too much so; for example, Dym was admiring a richly-chased chocolate-pot, and asked if it were an heirloom.

"No," returned Miss Nethecote, quietly; "it was a present from the same kind friend to Humphrey on his birthday. We do not boast heirlooms in our family. I remember the time when Humphrey was quite a poor man—that is, comparatively poor, you know. Ah, he has had his work to do in the world! No wonder he is a little rough, poor fellow. In those days I did not talk of gray-silk gowns, Miss Elliott."

"I think I heard Mr. Chichester say something of this," replied Dym.

"Did he tell you that we had lodgings at the Mill, and that no one in Birstwith would have thought of visiting us? That

was when Humphrey was the old squire's under-bailiff, and I was little more than a child. Poor old Humphrey, his pride had something to bear then. And just look at him now—there is not a man more respected in the West Riding; and it is all his own doing, too."

"After all, there must be something in Humphrey Nethecote," thought Dym, remorsefully.

"But now I want to know more about you and your brother," continued Miss Nethecote, winningly. She took the girl's hand and drew her gently to the corner of the old-fashioned couch, and then sat down beside her. "Never mind about Humphrey and me—it is a stupid subject, and one that will keep. I have heard so much about Mr. Elliott and St. Luke's, and I am longing to hear more."

Dym needed no other encouragement. In a few more minutes she was pouring out her little life-history of failures and trials. Miss Nethecote listened with admirable patience to the long story of Will's illness, which Dym seemed never weary of repeating, and did not once own she had heard it all before. Now and then she spoke a few words of encouragement and sympathy, as though to draw her out.

But, as Dym remembered afterwards, Miss Nethecote talked very little.

She sat, in the flower-scented twilight, beside the open window, looking dreamily out on the bed of roses all the time Dym was faltering out her tender little egotisms. The moonlight touched the white forehead and coronet of brown hair with a soft halo, and then fell on the large ringless hands, so quietly folded in her lap; once they stirred slightly as Dym waxed bolder and spoke of Mr. Latimer and the Great Unknown. She caught her breath and sighed when Dym, in her young enthusiasm, blundered on to the story of the dying navvy, and once bade her go on almost abruptly.

"I did not tell this to Mrs. Chichester this morning," finished Dym, with an excited little laugh; "I thought it better not. And now—how cold your hands are, Miss Nethecote!"

"Oh, it is nothing; we have been sitting so long by the open window. Your voice was rather pathetic in the darkness. Yes, you were right not to tell. Guy—Mr. Chichester, I mean—would not like any one to know this. You must keep it sacred between yourself and Will;" then, as she drew the

girl towards her with a kiss, "There, God bless you! I mean, thank Heaven for it! You see, he died repentant."

But the strangest part was that, as Honor kissed her, something wet touched Dym's cheek at the same moment. And the next minute Honor rose without a word, and passed through the open window into the lily-scented darkness.

CHAPTER XI.

A BIT OF THE SQUIRE'S TEMPER.

DYM'S first day at Ingleside had been an eventful one; but for the next few weeks her life flowed on with almost unbroken regularity.

A pleasing routine of duties filled up every hour of the day. Never idle herself, Mrs. Chichester found constant employment for her young companion's active mind and fingers —listlessness and vacuum were abhorrent to the mistress of Ingleside. In spite of her drudgery as governess, Dym had never been so fully as well as happily employed in her life.

Dym fitted into her niche with admirable tact. Quick to observe and learn, she soon discovered her proper place in the house, and kept it. Her bright brisk ways suited Mrs. Chichester to a nicety, and, though she still lectured the girl kindly on little failings, or took her to task gently for her brusquerie and impulsiveness, there was such sincere affection in her tone that Dym ceased to take umbrage at it, or to shy at every word like an unbroken colt.

Dym on her part soon learned to love Mrs. Chichester very heartily, though her love as yet lacked the enthusiasm of thorough partisanship. Loyal to her old predilection, she took Guy Chichester's part through thick and thin, and stoutly maintained that his mother wanted tact; but she was very tolerant nevertheless, and soon manifested an almost daughter-like dutifulness, submitting herself to the dictums of the elder lady with a docility that secretly astonished Mr. Chichester.

"The Dymphna angles are wearing off nicely and rounding themselves," he wrote once to Will. "My mother's discipline is doing your sister a great deal of good. I did not think before that Miss Elliott possessed the bump of reverence, but she gives in to all my mother's fads very prettily, and it is pleasant to see their honest affection for each other. My mother has been twice as bright since Miss Elliott came."

It was a pity Dym could not see that letter, for the one drop that was lacking in her enjoyment was Mr. Chichester himself.

He was very good to her, and showed her plenty of grave kindness; but the indefinable change of manner that she had first noticed in St. Luke's porch had returned the very next day after the flower-show, and had continued with slight intermission ever since.

Dym had never again sinned against his fastidiousness; but, for some days she was nervous, and feared to address him, till Mrs. Chichester, with characteristic gentleness, set her mind completely at rest on this subject.

"My dear," she said, one day, flushing a little over her words, as though they were difficult to her, "my son has been talking to me, and I find that his views differ from mine. I am afraid he has sadly radical opinions; but we must not forget that he is master here. He wishes no formality in the form of your address to him; so, my dear"—as Dym blushed and looked uncomfortable—"you may consider my words on Wednesday as completely unsaid; but all the same I cannot help saying that since then I have been greatly pleased at your change of manner;" and Dym tried hard to be grateful for this commendation. This time she certainly behaved very well; but it is to be doubted whether she ever really enjoyed a conversation with Mr. Chichester in his mother's presence.

There is no tribunal so severe to a woman as the censorship of her own sex. A man's judgment is lenient in comparison. Argus of the hundred eyes ought to have been a woman. It is lamentable how few ever compass the spirit of the marvelous chapter on charity. Very often the purer and better a woman, the harsher will be her judgment. "Stand back, that the hem of my garment may not be soiled," is often the inner language of a woman's breast. It is the phylacteries and long garments of the Pharisees over again. Alas, what

pitiable Christianity! How opposed to the wide-open hand of the benevolence that, fearless of self-compromise, helps and lifts out of the mire!

And how Draco-like are the laws of women, after all! Life for life; no forgiveness for sullied honor; no appeal against the righteous judgment of an unpitying world; pure eyes raised to heaven that would be better sometimes to be directed to earth, and hands whose whiteness is so carefully guarded, when, if contaminated by a passing touch, they would be washed white again even by the angels themselves.

For the angels look down on a world of sin, and love and pity it; and women at their purest come very far short of angels.

And when Dym knew both a little better, and could compare woman with woman, she learned that this was the difference between Honor Nethecote and Mrs. Chichester; for the one held the narrowness of a gentle bigotry, compared to the large-souled nature of the other.

Honor was severe, cruel even, in her estimate of the other sex; but she was never harsh to her own. She could be a little satirical sometimes to such women as Mrs. Fortescue; but to her sisterhood in general she was eminently loyal. And in this she was unlike other women.

And so people of Mrs. Fortescue's calibre called her fantastical and unconventional, and sometimes, though this latter word was whispered low, even a little improper.

And the best of them said she was too charitable.

And Mrs. Chichester shook her head and said the old grooves were the safest, and hoped that Honor would not infect Miss Elliott with her unfeminine notions, and went on delivering her little lectures on propriety and decorum into Dym's shrinking ears.

But Dym never was sure, in spite of Jeremy Taylor's and Mrs. Chichester's strongly-developed ideas on assurance, whether Honor's religion did not savor more of the doctrines of St. Paul. But, being young, she kept this opinion to herself.

Only one day she told Will of it, and Will agreed with her.

All her life long Dym stood a little in awe of Mrs. Chichester's lectures; but on the whole she took them very well, and after a time Mrs. Chichester, who had no daughter, learned to

make allowance for the eccentricities of youth and to be more lenient to its follies.

Even in these early days they got on astonishingly well together.

And her duties came within the limits of her capacity, and kept her temper smooth.

There was no lap-dog to wash; but all the flower-vases, baskets, and épergnes, down to the antique china bowl in Mr. Chichester's private sanctum, the library, were given into Dym's charge, who perfectly reveled in flowers. In the sweet early mornings she would come in from terrace or garden, looking as fresh as a rosebud herself, and laden with treasures, great crimson-hearted roses or fragrant clove pinks, gathered with the dew still clinging to them. Dym's clear little lark-like voice would be heard ringing from room to room, as she arranged them in all manner of pretty devices.

In the mornings she read to Mrs. Chichester, or wrote endless letters from her dictation. Mrs. Chichester would knit and dictate happily for hours; she always signed her name herself in her clear ladylike text, "Constance Medlicot Chichester." "Now, my dear, we will have the leading article and the court circular, and then we will go on with Mrs. Schimmelpenninck's Life." With the exception of a chapter of Thomas à Kempis, Dym saw very little of the theological books. Mrs. Chichester was very methodical, and Dym soon learned to read the Psalms and Morning Lessons as a matter of course. At times, it must be confessed, Mrs. Schimmelpenninck and the memorials of the Hare family bored her slightly. She had even the bad taste to prefer "Dombey and Son" to Macdonald's "Annals of a Quiet Neighborhood." "Dickens is very good, but he is hardly a religious writer; we must be careful how we are carried away by our love of the amusing," prosed the elder lady, gently.

"Dickens is delicious, and I half worship him," cried Dym, rebelliously. "There is not a piece of pathos to equal little Paul's death. Dickens's books make me feel good. I want to do more for my fellow-creatures when I read them; he is noble, grand," went on the girl, waxing into enthusiasm. "When I read a story, I don't like it to be a sermon: if I must take them, I like my drugs to be disguised in sweetmeats."

"All children talk alike," returned her friend, soberly. "I

am fond of Dickens too, and little Paul's death, when Guy read it last night, made me cry dreadfully. These works of fiction are very well, but we must not spoil our digestion with sugar-plums. I am afraid you do not find much pleasure in Mrs. Fletcher's 'Experiences,' my dear; but all the same I believe it is more wholesome reading for the morning."

Dym had a little argument one day on the life of the Princess Louise of France; it was a lovely morning, warm, yet tempered with shade, and Dym had a rebellious conviction that the banks of the Nidd would be delicious on such a day.

"I think it was better to be the Princess Louise in her pink dress than the Mère Thérèse de Saint-Augustin," she exclaimed, half yawning with weariness and *ennui* that written good thoughts always produce on a mind not ready to digest them. "What is the use of making oneself miserable? If I were a Romanist to-morrow, I would keep my common sense: what merit can there be, for example, in eating a rotten egg?"

"My dear, you are too apt to seize on an unimportant point in a book and bring it prominently forward. I suppose, not being Roman Catholics, our ideas differ; but I think these Carmelite nuns were good creatures: Mère Thérèse especially is a shining example of a *vie dévote*."

"All the same it is very disagreeable to be always trying to find disagreeable things to do," returned Dym, stubbornly: "one has plenty without searching. The roses and sunshine were made for our enjoyment. One of those old Fathers of whom you are so fond told us it was a good thing to abstain from smelling a rose sometimes. Hadn't we better draw down the blinds? I am sure Mère Thérèse would in our place."

"Get your hat and take Kelpie for a run across the meadows: the fine day is making you argumentative," interrupted Mrs. Chichester, kindly, who had read the girl's restlessness aright. "There, put a marker in the place; I shall have plenty to think over when you are gone."

When Dym, needing no further word, had run out of the room, she sighed softly once or twice at the girlish irreverence. "There is no need to pull down the blind for me," she thought to herself. "When one enters the tunnel the light goes quickly. I have made two mistakes in my work this morning, and never found it out; and last night I startled Guy by

falling over a footstool. If only I could say this, 'It needs be,' more happily!" And Mrs. Chichester leaned her head on her hand and sighed.

In spite of her narrowness, she was a brave woman, and could tell of many a hand-to-hand battle against depression in the long watches of the night, when Dym was dreaming happily of Will.

In the afternoons they used to drive out; sometimes, but not often, Guy drove them. Dym saw very little of him; he always dined with them, but they rarely had a pleasant sociable evening afterwards.

When Dym first arrived, things were rather different; he would follow them in from the dining-room, and would remain for an hour or two, either listening to her reading or going on with the book himself; sometimes he would tease his mother into an argument, or persuade them to accompany him to the billiard-room and see him and Harry Trevor knock about a few balls for their amusement. Very often the vicar and Mrs. Fortescue would come up to dinner, the latter in grande toilette: these evenings were more ceremonious and less pleasant. Dym, who had droll fancies sometimes, always spoke of them as the "wax-light evenings," as on those occasions the white china lamps were always replaced by an abundance of these wax tapers. Mr. Nethecote and his sister had not yet made their appearance at Ingleside.

But these pleasant ways were relinquished one by one. Before two weeks were over, Dym ceased to wonder that Mrs. Chichester should require a companion, and was compelled to avow that there were serious flaws even in her hero. Dym had not often to complain of his ill-timed pleasantry, for he rarely joked at all, and then only on general subjects; now and then he would relapse into his abrupt quizzical moods, but generally he was merely kind and polite, and, if truth must be told, terribly absent.

Dym, who was on her best behavior, never ventured to remind him that she had not seen him for two days. He spoke quite sharply once when she commented very innocently on an unusually long absence. Mrs. Chichester, who felt for her discomfiture, hastened to console her.

"My son never likes his movements to be observed. When you know him better, you will not take a quick answer so

much to heart. Guy is kindness itself, but he has a sharp way sometimes with him, and just now he is a little restless."

Dym got over this, but she never failed to fret over a missing good-night; and once her eyes filled with tears when Mr. Chichester came into the room and left it again without even seeing her. "He was kinder to me in Paradise Row," argued the girl, sadly; and yet she had received abundant proof of his thoughtfulness and generosity.

Dym drove out every afternoon with Mrs. Chichester: they often made pleasant excursions to places of interest in the neighborhood, or sometimes went long distances to pay or return calls. One afternoon they went on a shopping expedition to Harrogate, solely on Dym's account.

When Dym had been a week at Ingleside, Mrs. Chichester approached the subject of her wardrobe with the greatest tact and delicacy; they were going to have some friends to dinner —only Kate and Mr. Fortescue, and a gentleman from York —what was Miss Elliott going to wear?

Dym, who had rung the changes from shabby black silk to pink muslin for seven whole evenings, hung her head a little confusedly, and then, summoning up her courage, honestly confessed the poverty of her resources. Will was too poor to buy her many dresses. What should she do? If Mrs. Chichester liked, she would willingly remain away for the evening. "I cannot help myself, but I have no right to shame you and Mr. Chichester by my shabbiness," cried Dym, honestly.

Mrs. Chichester stroked her hair by way of answer.

"Don't talk of shabbiness. With your pretty figure you look well in anything; there is no fear of your shaming us. Well, I will talk of it again, my dear. Let Dorothy iron out your dress, and we shall see."

Of course Mrs. Chichester went to her son directly afterwards.

"What shall we do, Guy? They are so dreadfully poor, and I hate hurting people's pride. Perhaps if you gave me a little money to lay out for her, we might call it an advance." But Mr. Chichester objected.

"Advanced money is only borrowing. I don't see any merit in giving way to false pride. I always knew Miss Elliott and her brother were poor; but hitherto they have never been ashamed of their poverty."

"But, Guy——"

"But, mother, it would not be you if you did not try a little management. Why not speak out plainly to Miss Elliott, 'I want my companion to look the lady she is; and, as this is not possible without means, I am going to buy you two or three pretty dresses, and you must come with me and choose them.'"

"Don't you think she might feel hurt, Guy?"

"Not a bit of it."

Mr. Chichester was right. A few graceful words soon removed the difficulty, and put Dym completely at her ease.

"It is so very kind of you, my dear, to allow me to do this for you—you do not know what pleasure you are giving me," she said, so gratefully that Dym felt ashamed of the reluctance she had felt at first, and then gave herself up to the novel delights of shopping on an extensive scale.

I do not know that Mrs. Chichester thought the purchases as wonderful as Dym did, but all the same she was charmed with the girl's soberness and judgment; as she told her son afterwards, she did not believe a young thing could have shown such good common sense.

Cinderella, suddenly transported into fairy-land, found herself utterly undazzled and beyond temptation; she would have nothing to say to the delicate maize and cream colors that were shown out of pure compliment to her olive complexion. "These things are not for me," she objected. She put them all aside, and would have nothing but a black silk. "One can always put on different ribbons and make a fresh toilet. You would grow so weary of one color," she observed, apologetically.

"Yes, a black silk will always look nice," assented Mrs. Chichester. She was very pleased with her young charge, and took especial pains over the richness of the fabric. Dym asked for white muslin after that; perhaps she remembered that Mr. Chichester had once said "that she would look well in a white gown." "That will wash nicely," she said, looking up with naïve, innocent eyes into Mrs. Chichester's face; but that lady was too deeply engrossed to answer her.

"You must have something for autumn wear; our northern winds are very cold," she returned, somewhat absently, as she added a dark tweed to Dym's stock, and then bade her match some gloves quickly. "Guy said we were to be sure not to

forget these, and it is getting late." She would not listen when Dym hesitated, and hurried her out of the shop without listening to the girl's faltering thanks.

"I think we have done our business well, but I am tired, my dear, and must just close my eyes."

Dym covered her up without a word, and remained quite still during the rest of the drive; but how happy she was notwithstanding! A light breeze had set in; the gray dust whirled about the horses' feet, the hedgerows were white with it; the cows were lowing across the green upland; groups of rustic children stared open-mouthed at the fine equipage and the little bright-eyed lady who sat in one corner smiling to herself; the sun was sinking slowly behind a great red-and-golden cloud. As they passed Ripley mill, there was a gleam and splash of water. "How beautiful it is! One can be happy in this world after all," thought Dym. "Every one is so good to me just now, and I do not deserve it." And there was a stirring of true affection in her heart as she glanced at her tired companion.

Mrs. Chichester was very quiet, but the sad, beautiful eyes were looking fondly at the landscape. "Two, perhaps three, years at the latest, and all this will be a memory," she thought. "Ah, well, one day, instead of green fields, it will be the 'lake mingled with fire.'"

That afternoon and evening lingered pleasantly in Dym's remembrance. Mr. Chichester was on the terrace when they returned, and had a kind greeting word for Dym as well as his mother. The conversation during dinner was carried on in a lighter vein than usual, and with less manifest effort on the squire's part; and afterwards he followed them into the drawing-room, and entertained them for an hour or two with recitals and anecdotes picked up in his foreign travel.

Never had Mrs. Chichester looked happier; and as to Dym, she could hardly compose herself to sleep sufficiently. "Why is he not always as he is to-night?" she thought; "it is Paradise Row over again. What has been the reason of all this stiffness and silence? How well and cheerful he seemed! And I am sure by his manner he is pleased with me."

But Dym's pleasure at Mr. Chichester's changed manner did not last long; the next day he was taciturn, almost silent, and as time went on he became still more moody and restless.

In spite of her extreme loyalty, Dym was compelled to avow at times that Mr. Chichester was strangely irritable.

Trifles disturbed his equanimity; once or twice he spoke almost sharply to his mother, and, though he certainly apologized afterwards, he seemed to resent the grieved look on her face as an additional provocation.

"Something has put the squire out," she heard Miles once say to his young assistant, Stewart; and the scared look on Stewart's face when his master severely reprimanded him for some breach of duty proved the squire's displeasure was a thing to be dreaded.

During those days Ingleside was not the paradise Dym thought it on her first arrival; the servants moved softly, almost timidly, about the house; and there was a wan look in Mrs. Chichester's eyes when she came down in the morning, as though she had not slept, and a visible flagging of spirits during the hours she and Dym passed alone together.

Just now their evenings were almost as solitary as their days.

The shooting-season had commenced; the squire breakfasted in his library, and left the house with his gun and dog directly afterwards, seldom making his appearance in the evening till the gong had sounded for dinner.

Strange to say, Dym almost learned to dread those dinners. Mrs. Chichester and she would make some effort to appear gay and unconcerned before the servants, but it was terribly hard work. Dym would collect little scraps of village gossip, and retail them bit by bit between the courses; Mrs. Chichester would respond, or address some questions to her son about the day's sport, which he would answer absently and without interest; but he seldom volunteered a subject on his own account, and now and then would relapse into such gloomy silence that the ladies, fearing to disturb him, talked under their breath to each other, or hurried over dessert in order to leave the room more quickly.

"My son is ill at ease," the poor lady once said to Dym on one of these dismal occasions, when he had scarcely opened his lips except to refuse every dish that was offered him; she had spent a long time that morning with her cook, devising a dinner that should be composed of all his favorite dishes; and when he had waved aside the last impatiently,

she could forbear no longer. "Guy, you will be ill if you do not eat," she said, anxiously; "you have never refused the mayonnaise before, dear—take a little just to please me."

"I dislike forcing an appetite," was the quick rejoinder. "Nethecote and I lunched heartily on the Five Acres. Your cook's skill is wasted on me to-night." And, though actual tears of disappointment stood in his mother's eyes, he would touch nothing but some dry bread and celery.

"Madam fears he will be off again," was Humphrey's sole remark, when Dym, meeting him in the village, confided to him, somewhat incautiously, the state of affairs up at the Great House.

"It is just like the calm before a storm," replied the girl, sadly. "All the servants look dull and half frightened, and Mrs. Chichester is so downcast I can hardly bear to see her; and nobody comes to see us—not even your sister."

But Mr. Nethecote merely shrugged his shoulders.

"When the storm comes, you will see Honor soon enough; she is no fair-weather friend to Madam," was the oracular answer.

Dym did not know what to make of it all. She often heard of Mr. Nethecote forming one of the shooting-party; but the squire never invited him in to dinner; and though Mrs. Chichester, willing to make a diversion, proposed it one day, the proposition was quietly negatived. But Dym was soon to judge for herself what the Chichester temper meant.

She was standing one evening by the open window, waiting for the announcement of dinner, when the squire made his appearance in the drawing-room somewhat earlier than usual.

Dym, who saw him enter, went forward involuntarily with a smile.

She was in a gayer mood than usual, having received a long, cheerful letter from Will that day.

She had just gathered some late blooming roses, and wore them as a breast-knot on her white dress. Somehow the roses, the white dress, and the girlish freshness and sweetness of Dym's whole aspect seemed to strike Mr. Chichester, and he relaxed from his grave mood to say, "You look very happy, Miss Elliott," before he passed on to give his mother the kiss which he never omitted.

"Any letters for me, mother?"

"Nothing of any consequence, Guy. I looked over them all, and they were simply business notes. Have you had good sport, my dear?"

"Pretty fair. Not much of a bag, after all. Silcote is a poor shot, and Nethecote was not there. Well, as I have ten minutes to spare, I may as well look at them now." And he left the room.

"I think Mr. Chichester looks brighter to-day," hazarded Dym; but Mrs. Chichester only sighed, and the silence was broken at last by the sound of his returning step in the corridor.

This time he strode by Dym without a word.

"Mother, when did this letter come?" he asked, in a tone of suppressed anger.

Dym looked almost as frightened as his mother, as she dropped her knitting and adjusted her eye-glass nervously. There was a dark look on the squire's face, and the veins of his temples were swollen like whipcord. If eyes ever flashed, his did then.

"Mother, one would think you had never seen the handwriting before," as Mrs. Chichester slowly and painfully inspected it.

"It is so dark," she stammered. "Oh, yes, I see from whom it is now. My dear boy, this was not among the other letters—yes, I am sure of that," speaking eagerly, but with decision.

"You are perfectly certain?"

"Perfectly; this must have come by a later delivery—the three o'clock, no doubt. I never go into the library after the morning, and no one has brought it to me."

"I knew it was that fool Stewart's fault; and he has told me a lie to cover his blunder. This is the second time he has disobeyed my express orders to bring you my letters when I am out. Well, he shall know I am not to be trifled with."

"Oh, Guy, my dear boy, do wait a moment, and let me speak to him."

"Why, mother?" very haughtily.

"You are so hasty, dear; and I know he will be too frightened and sorry to say anything. There, he is gone," as the squire merely walked out of the room with an additional frown on his face. "Oh, what shall I do?" she continued, clasping her hands in distress, and quite oblivious of Dym's presence.

"If Stewart has disobeyed orders, he deserves to be scolded," observed Dym, soothingly. "Mr. Chichester has a right to be vexed at such negligence."

"Vexed! ah, but he will send him away; and Stewart is such a nice lad, and has a widowed mother and six or seven young brothers and sisters. He sends all his wages home to his mother: it will break her heart if Guy sends him away. Oh, what shall I do?" repeated Mrs. Chichester, helplessly. "And I promised Stewart I would raise his wages next month for good conduct."

"Perhaps he will only give him a good scolding, and let him stay," suggested Dym; but Mrs. Chichester shook her head.

"You don't know Guy. I never knew him hard on a first offense; but he rarely passes over a second; and he so hates disobedience!"

"Was the letter so important, then?"

"I don't know; I suppose he thinks so. If it had been any one else's letter, he might not have noticed it so; but now —no, it is all over with Stewart."

Dym was afraid this was the case when she saw Stewart's face at dinner: the poor lad's eyes were swollen with crying, and his hands quite shook when he handed the plates. She heard him blubbering out the whole tale after dinner into the ear of his sympathizing mistress.

Mrs. Chichester went into the library afterwards, and had a long talk with her son; but she came out with an agitated face, and told Dym her intercession for the culprit had been fruitless.

"He has given him only a week's notice; and the poor boy is so reckless that he declares he will enlist rather than go home and face his mother. I don't think I ever saw Guy so put out before; he will not hear a word."

Dym listened quite scared to this fresh revelation of the squire's character. Could this be Grace Dunster's hero—the man who tended Ned Smithers—who could grieve so tenderly over a dead babe? Strange inconsistency of a great nature warped and disturbed by passion! She little knew, though his mother guessed, that poor Stewart was only the scapegoat of another's fault. She could find nothing comforting to say as Mrs. Chichester sat down and cried softly in sheer vexation

and pity. The eyes that were too brave to weep over their approaching blindness could shed tears over a servant-lad's trouble.

"He must not go," she said, at last, wiping her eyes. "He is a good boy, and never told a lie before; and I promised his mother to look after him."

"But what can we do?" asked Dym, disconsolately, "if Mr. Chichester is so unjust, and will not allow you to plead for him?"

Mrs. Chichester's answer was singular.

"Oh, no, you must not say that: he is never unjust; my boy is never unkind unless these moods are on him. Ah, well, my dear, it is no use talking; to-morrow we will go and see Honor."

CHAPTER XII.

THE VILLAGE PEACEMAKER.

GOOD sometimes comes out of evil.

Dym derived a crumb of consolation even from Stewart's misfortune. As the quaint old proverb hath it, "It is an ill wind that blows no one any good."

"I shall see Honor again," was her first waking thought the next morning, as she puzzled out of a labyrinth of dreams to find a fresh September wind blowing over the sunny terraces, and "the last rose of summer" tapping softly against her window pane.

That evening at Nidderdale Cottage seemed full of far-off sweetness in the retrospect—a confusion of lilies, moonlight, and low-toned talk. Some "long-drawn-out chord of sympathy" never ceased to vibrate strangely in the girl's heart at the mere mention of Honor's name. Sometimes a chance speech from the squire or a trick of his voice brought her vividly before her. The odd abruptness, the undercurrent of deep feeling, the slow vein of mingled thought and satire, now dreamy, now breaking into full current of speech, all returned again and again to Dym's memory. Her interest had been

strongly excited: to tell the truth, she was secretly wearying to see Miss Nethecote's face again.

But since the village flower-show they had never met. Twice a day on Sundays Dym had caught sight of a pure Greek profile and gray silk dress in a little side-pew appropriated to the female singers; for the vicar, in spite of his High-Church proclivities, had not yet succeeded in organizing a trained choir, though report whispered that a few plowmen and farmers' lads were being secretly drilled by the vicar and Miss Nethecote in a far-off barn, not a great distance from Nidderdale Cottage.

In default of white surplices and boy-choristers, the choir-stalls remained suggestively empty, and the cantori side was distantly represented by the miller's stalwart sons, a harmonious blacksmith, and the baker's assistant, who was fictitiously supposed to have the purest bass in the village; while the decani side responded in a variety of sweet trebles, led by Miss Nethecote's fine soprano.

Dym sat with Mrs. Chichester in the squire's pew, which commanded a good view of the chancel and vacant stalls; the squire himself preferred occupying one of the free seats near the door; he always sat on a bench in company with Dame Ford, and an old patriarch in a smock-frock, who looked about a hundred, and was only sixty-five and toothless. Dym, feeling faint one Sunday, and sitting in the cool porch a while to recover herself, saw the patriarch, with horn spectacles on nose, looking over the squire's big book and whining out a dreary falsetto. How rich and full Guy's tones sounded by contrast!

Dym marveled not a little over this whim of the squire's.

"Does not St. James tell us to have no respect of persons?" he returned, gravely, when Dym had hazarded some inquiry as to this curious choice of seat. "Though I am a Broad Churchman, Miss Elliott, I am all for free and open churches. There is no rank in religion, and for myself I would as soon go to heaven with the dame and old Martin as with your titled folks."

"Is that why you sit near the door?" asked Dym, with unusual boldness, for she was curious on the subject; but the squire only turned off the question with a jest. He had met them as usual at the bottom of the steps, and had given his

mother his arm. It was their custom to linger a moment and exchange greetings and little civilities with their neighbors. "Kindness is cheap; it costs nothing to pat a curly head and ask after mother, and you have no idea how popular it makes one," he said, once, laughing. Sometimes some wee toddling mite would run out from the group of school-children and clasp the squire round the knee; if the cheeks were clean and rosy, there were kisses and half-pence as well as pats; but they always left him if they caught sight of Honor. Miss Nethecote always came out last with her brother, and the children clustered round her like bees round their queen—boys as well as girls. Honor would take a chubby hand or two and walk on swiftly—she never volunteered more than a smile and a nod to the squire's party as she passed.

"You shall have plenty of lollipops if you will stay with me," the squire said once to a little village beauty that he much affected; she had come running to him over the graves with her red hood down on her neck and her fair hair streaming. "You will stay with me, Susie, won't you?" But Susie would not.

"I'll give 'ee a kiss, but I must go to Nannygoat"—for thereto had Miss Nethecote's name degenerated on baby lips. "Great mammie, tell he to put Susie down."

"She is always wild to go to the good lady, Mr. Chitterful," explained Dame Ford, apologetically, for Susie was her grandchild.

"Faithless Susie, like the rest of your fair sex," quoth the squire, as he put her down gently from his arms. "There, run away, you baby." "Red riding-hood" Susie had hold of the gray silk after that, and trotted confidingly along, chattering in her broken baby dialect to Honor.

"It is well to be Squire Chitterful—do you admire Dame Ford's pronunciation, Miss Elliott?—but it is better to be 'the good lady:' isn't it, now?"

Evidently Miss Nethecote heard him, for she colored high as she passed on. Dym found out afterwards that Miss Nethecote was chiefly known by this name in the village; and certainly the contest for popularity between the two might have run hot and high. Perhaps the balance was in Honor's favor. "You see, the squire have moods, and Miss Nethecote have none," as an old almsman once expressed it.

Dym danced away to fetch her hat on the morning in question, when Mrs. Chichester had again reiterated her determination to call on Miss Nethecote. She listened with a sort of wonderment as she heard her tell Stewart to take the lower road, and to be sure not to drive by the five-acre field, where the squire was shooting. "Was she afraid of the guns, or did she wish her visit to Nidderdale to be kept a secret from her son?" Dym had to keep her curiosity to herself. Mrs. Chichester's face this morning did not invite confidence: there was a pained, anxious expression upon it, and the same tired look about the eyes, as though she had passed another, wakeful night.

During the drive she scarcely spoke, and seemed so lost in thought that she quite started when the carriage stopped, and Dym said, "We are just in time, for Miss Nethecote has only this moment ridden up to the door."

Miss Nethecote saw them at once. She quickly dismounted, and, throwing the reins over her horse's neck, gathered up her long habit in one hand and walked quietly towards the carriage, the mare following her like a dog. There was a pleased smile of recognition as she saw Dym, and then she passed round to Mrs. Chichester's side of the carriage.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Chichester; you do not often pay me such early morning visits. Will you come in?—Humphrey is in the orchard."

"No, thank you," returned Mrs. Chichester; then, in an embarrassed tone, "My business is to you, Honor."

Honor nodded in a perfectly business-like way, and then motioned Stewart aside.

"What is wrong?" she asked, in a clear low voice, as though it were an every-day occurrence for Mrs. Chichester to drive up and tell her her troubles. She stood perfectly silent, with her hand on the carriage-door, while Mrs. Chichester whispered a long story in her ear. Dym, who could hardly catch a word, looked on in curious admiration and wonder. What a picture Honor was, standing under the trees in her blue habit and shady hat and feathers, the mare lipping her skirt daintily all the while in search of concealed sugar!

"You must wait, Hagar, my beauty," said her mistress, tenderly, once, as Mrs. Chichester grew hot and faltered over her narrative. The poor lady wiped away a few more tears of distress and humiliation.

"You must be in trouble indeed," returned Honor, looking at her steadily, when she had finished.

"I am; I would not have had this happen for worlds."

"I mean you must be in a sore strait to send for me," observed Miss Nethecote, in a meaning tone, at which Mrs. Chichester colored up like a girl.

"I thought you would help me," she pleaded.

Miss Nethecote knit her white brows over the deprecatory tone.

"Have I ever refused to help you, Mrs. Chichester?"

"God forbid! I mean, what should we do if you denied or grew tired of us?"

"I wish I were," was the singular answer. "Well, Mrs. Chichester, what do you want me to do?"

"Change your dress and come home with me."

"Impossible!"

"Oh, Honor!"

A grave inscrutable smile came over Miss Nethecote's face.

"I cannot belie my name and break my word, can I? I have promised to take luncheon with Mrs. Grey."

"Come afterwards; come up to dinner—we shall be quite alone this evening."

"I must have Humphrey for my *vis-à-vis*, then."

"Very well."

"And I must make another condition—you must leave Miss Elliott with me."

Mrs. Chichester looked at Dym's happy face a little suspiciously.

"I can't spare her, Honor," somewhat uneasily.

"As you please," was the careless answer.

"Do you really want her?" in a relenting tone.

"I have made up my mind not to want anything in this world, Mrs. Chichester."

"Well, well, I ought not to refuse such a trifling favor. I am getting a crabbed old woman with my troubles. Guy is a dear boy; but he is a great care to me."

"Most dear boys are," somewhat dryly.

"But you will do your best for Stewart to-night, Honor?"

"I have promised," was the laconic answer.

"Guy is a little difficult just now. I hope you will not have hard work, my dear."

"I can't cheat myself into any such pleasing belief. If there be one thing the squire loathes as poison, it is a lie."

"But Stewart never said anything false before."

"Well, that is in his favor, certainly. I suppose, as the mischief lies at my door—my letter being the unfortunate apple of discord—I must do my utmost to rectify it; but I will not imitate Stewart's falsehood. The business was of the utmost importance."

"So I feared," answered Mrs. Chichester.

"A lad down our way was in sad trouble. I told the squire all about it in my letter, and begged him to be lenient to the culprit. If he had known all the particulars, as I do, or even half"—here Honor's mouth grew stern—"he would hardly have committed the poor boy to prison for a petty theft, a first offense, and half broken his brother's heart. Stewart's stupid blunder has brought terrible grief to a respectable family."

"To be sure, Guy was in court yesterday. This is worse than I thought, Honor; no wonder Guy was so angry."

"He knew how grieved I should be; one of my Sunday-scholars too—such a promising lad." And actually a tear rolled down Miss Nethecote's face as she spoke. "I would have gone into court and begged him off myself, only I was down with Jane Travers, who was suddenly taken worse. Never mind, Mrs. Chichester; poor George must bear his penalty now."

"My dear Honor, I had no idea of this." And Mrs. Chichester took her hand kindly; but Miss Nethecote quietly withdrew it.

"Things will go wrong sometimes; but I don't see that Stewart need suffer as well as poor George. Now, Miss Elliott, jump out, please. I don't think we need detain Mrs. Chichester any longer."

"How quick you are to dismiss me, Honor!" exclaimed Mrs. Chichester, mournfully.

Miss Nethecote opened her lips as though to answer, and then the gray eyes suddenly filled up with tears, and she turned away.

"Good-by, Honor; you will not be late?"

"Good-by!" was the sole reply vouchsafed by Miss Nethecote; she bowed quite gravely in answer to Mrs. Chichester's parting smile and wave of her hand. She curved one arm

round the mare's neck and leaned on it somewhat heavily; Dym heard her draw a heavy sigh of relief as the carriage rolled along the sunny road, and then she turned on her quite gayly.

"'Something attempted, something done, hath earned a night's repose.' I love that glorious old blacksmith for that one speech. Isn't life a patchwork, Miss Elliott?" linking her arm in hers and leading the way to the house. "Every day there is a fresh bit to put in—a star here, a cross there."

"What an idea!" laughed Dym, joyously. There were the little lawn, the apple-trees, the lilies, the doves cooing on the roof; through the open door she could see great flecks of purple shadow on the grass; the cows had taken refuge in the orchard, the geese came waddling up with outstretched necks to the back door.

"Oh, how delicious! How glad I am to be here again!" cooed Dym, in unison with them. "How happy you must be to live in such a little paradise!"

"Are earthly paradises free from briers and nettles? Tut, Miss Elliott; you are too imaginative. To-day I only see cows and grass; the lilies struggle up like weeds. I am still thinking of my patchwork."

"You are fretting over that poor boy, you mean," returned Dym, softly. They were standing in the porch, and Miss Nethecote was feeding the mare with the long-coveted dainty.

"Why will not bits of sugar make us happy?" moralized Miss Nethecote: she was evidently in no mood for sympathy. "The worst of patchwork is, one cannot always fit one's pieces; our bit of stuff is three-cornered when we want it square."

"We can shape it to our liking, I suppose?" returned Dym, trying to enter into the humor of the thing.

"Cut and snip it to pieces, I suppose you mean. Ah, well" —sighing—"I shall have some tough work to-night. Now, Hagar, my darling, sweets to the sweet, but moderation in all things; my pocket is empty. Miss Elliott, my mare never loves her corn so much as when I feed her myself; so, while I attend to her, and change my dress, you may as well bestow your company on Humphrey, who is smoking his pipe under the orchard wall."

So Dym wandered over the field, and found her way into a tiny orchard, where she saw the well-known shooting-coat and

straw hat, in company with a small gray dog, who ran forward, barking furiously, and then, changing his mind, sat up and looked foolish.

"Why, this is not—yes, it is—Kiddle-a-wink?"

Kiddle-a-wink cocked one ear, and begged, till he scented rabbits, and, exchanging the pathetic for the practical, disappeared down a neighboring warren, the fag end of a gray tail wagging in mid-air.

"Why is Kiddle-a-wink here?" she asked, as Humphrey came up and shook hands; "he is Mr. Chichester's dog."

"My sister would beg to differ from you, Miss Elliott: there is a great difference between was and is: he is Honor's property now."

"I thought Mr. Chichester was so fond of him."

"Kiddle-a-wink unfortunately took a great fancy to Honor, and would follow her about anywhere in preference to his master; so the squire told her one day she had better keep him. Kiddle-a-wink was as bad as little Susie Ford last Sunday."

"Every one seems to love Miss Nethecote," returned Dym, musingly; and then, as she walked under the sunny wall with Humphrey, she related to him the history of last night—poor Stewart's misfortune, the squire's wrath, and Mrs. Chichester's unavailing intercession.

"Why does she think your sister will have more influence with the squire?" asked the girl, curiously. She was growing very confidential with this simple, honest Yorkshireman. She began to understand that, in spite of his plainness, he was a man one could respect and trust; during these weeks she had often met him in the village, and had learned to prattle fearlessly to him when he turned and walked back to Ingleside with her.

There was a curious mingling of good nature and gentleness in the tone in which he always answered her. Dym was never quite sure that he did not regard her as a child and look down on her from the unanswerable altitude of middle age. He would stave off awkward questions like the present with a gruff "Ay, ay, young maidens are always curious;" or "Come, come, you did not mean me to answer that, now;" and elevate his eyebrows in such droll perplexity that Dym could only laugh.

Once when, in somewhat bad taste, Dym persisted in pressing him on some point, he patted her gently on the shoulder with his great hand, and said, soothingly, "Nay, nay, Miss Elliott, I'm a plain man; one doesn't like to use a downright No to a lady, so be a sensible girl and don't ask me any more." And Dym for a long time after that felt like a scolded child.

But he never checked her long girlish preambles, and on the present occasion smoked his pipe in profound gravity while Dym told her story; and when she repeated her question a second time, "Why does she think your sister will have more influence with the squire?" he drew a long whiff, and muttered, "It is not thinking; she knows it;" and then, in his usual manner,—

"Bless me, Miss Elliott, don't you know the Duchess can do what she likes? Haven't you found out yet who is the village peacemaker, and the Lady Bountiful of the whole place?"

"I suppose it is your sister.'

"Honor—of course it is Honor. From Dame Ford to the squire, there is not one of them that can do without her. Bless her, they know what a noble heart she has. There is not a lady in the land that can compete with her."

Humphrey's hearty enthusiasm was very pleasant to Dym. She gave a sympathizing smile, and waited for him to go on.

"From the moment she grew up to be a woman, and almost before, nothing would do but Honor—Honor. I never knew the time when a child would not run to her and hide its head in her lap. I have seen the very babies try to clamber out of their mothers' arms to get to her. I suppose there is something winsome in her very face."

"That is what I have felt," returned Dym, thoughtfully; and then Humphrey took another whiff and went on.

"I don't believe that there is ever a man, woman, or child taken sick for miles round that Honor is not sent for. The number of death-beds she has attended is astonishing. I have seen her come home from a child's funeral looking as pitiful almost as the poor mother. She is gossip, as they call it, to half the babies in the place. She adopted a whole family once."

"She must be very good," sighed Dym.

"Ay, 'the good lady,' as they call her. Talking of every

one wanting Honor, did you ever hear of Gammer Jebbs's girl?" And, as Dym replied in the negative, Mr. Nethecote indulged in a hearty laugh at the reminiscence before he explained himself.

"It certainly shows no one can do without her. Well, it was one desperately cold night in January. We had had a rare snow-storm that day, and our field, and even the garden walks, were a foot deep in snow. I was just enjoying a first sweet sleep—it was not long past midnight—when something hard thrown up to my window roused me; and as this was repeated again and again, I had a vague idea—being only half awake—that some school-boy was indulging in a practical jest, and throwing snow-balls at my window, and in some wrath I thrust my head out and asked who was there.

"You must know, Miss Elliott, my window looks over the outer wall and towards the road, and, what with the intense whiteness and the faint glimmer of starlight, I could just see a stooping figure under the wall, evidently preparing a fresh missile for the disturbance of my slumbers.

"'Who are you?' I shouted out, in my gruffest tones, for a man does not like to be woke out of a first sleep.

"'I'm Tabby—Gammer Jebbs's girl,' came up, in shrill tones.

"'And what do you want, Gammer Jebbs's girl?' I demanded, still more wrathfully.

"'I want t' mistress,' was the undaunted response. 'I shied up at t' winder, but I didn't know it was yourn, maister. Grannie wants t' mistress particular.'

"'Any one sick, Tabby?' I asked, rather more gently; for it was not a new thing for Honor now and then to be roused for the sake of a dying child, and I knew Gammer Jebbs was rather a favorite with the Duchess. 'Grandmother is not ill, is she?'

"'Grannie's purely, maister, but t' coo is mighty bad; and grannie she says, "Tabby," she says, "just put on thy hood, lass, and run t' mistress. If we do naught till daybreak the poor beast will die. She gave me plenty of good stuff last year that cured feyther's rheumatiz—so maybe she will think of somethin' for Daisy." So please will mistress come and see grannie's coo?' Rather a cool request, was it not?"

"Did you wake your sister, after all?"

"Honor was awake, and was enjoying the fun immensely; but, not being a veterinary surgeon, of course she knew nothing of 't' coo.' I had to go myself."

"What, through the snow, and in the middle of the night?"

"Would you have had me leave the poor beast to die? You would not do for a farmer's wife, Miss Elliott. I spent a good two hours in the shed, and never felt happier than when the poor thing got up on its legs again; it is hard to see these dumb creatures suffer."

"There is your sister," returned Dym, running forward to meet her; but Kiddle-a-wink was before her, and was jumping and barking round her like a mad thing. Miss Nethecote took him up and caressed him as she talked.

"Whither away, Duchess?"

"Down to Woodside, with Miss Elliott."

"Perhaps Miss Elliott would prefer a quiet luncheon here," suggested Humphrey.

"Miss Elliott has had sufficient luxury at Ingleside; she must make herself useful, and help me carve for the children. Come, Miss Elliott, you shall have your choice: a *tête-à-tête* meal with Humphrey, or a noisy luncheon with half a dozen riotous children, and an overtasked maid-of-all-work to wait on you?"

"Your picture is not inviting, but I will certainly go with you," replied Dym, who felt truly that she was allowed no choice in the matter; but how she did long for a quiet day at the cottage and another cosy talk with Honor!

"My sister is determined to make you a martyr as well as herself. No one understands her infatuation for Mrs. Grey, not even her husband, poor man! Duchess!"

"Well, Humphrey."

"I have put in some fine juicy plums and pears to go with your new-laid eggs. I suppose you have not forgotten your usual posy?"

"As though I should forget it, when flowers are Esther's chief pleasures! Keep Kiddle-a-wink, please, Humphrey; he makes such riot with the children."

"Ay, ay," replied Humphrey; but he stood idle a long time in the doorway, watching his sister and Miss Elliott disappear down the road, before he turned in at the gate with a sigh.

CHAPTER XIII.

HONOR'S INTERCESSION.

WOODSIDE, as Mr. Grey's house was called, lay in a little hollow scooped out of the main road, and forming a sort of dingle, beside which flowed the trout-stream; the garden ascended at the back, and led by a gate into a small pine-wood, which looked deliciously shady by day, but somewhat sombre by night, the house being perfectly lonely, with the exception of two cottages lower down the road.

Dym thought the steep garden beautiful, and longed to explore it; but on nearer view it was somewhat wild and uncultivated; weeds grew in the garden paths, and roses and lilies bloomed amid cabbages and tall straggling heads of asparagus; the ivy that covered the house was graceful in its negligence, but sadly required cropping and training; and two boys and a girl, looking equally uncared for, were playing at horses before the gate. They rushed up to Honor at once, and the leader—a pretty little dark-eyed thing—exclaimed,—

"Oh, I am so glad you've come, Miss Nethecote! Now mamma won't cry any more to-day."

"If mamma is ill, you should not have left her, Amy," returned Honor, reprovingly. And the child hung her head.

"Mother said we might go out and play, as she wasn't well enough to hear us our lessons," shouted the driver—a sturdy bright-faced boy of nine.

"Never mind, Rupert, you shall do your Latin with me," observed Miss Nethecote, consolingly. And as the young student looked anything but gratified, she added, "I have some fine pears for some good children, but they must be fairly earned first."

"Oh, I'll come in and do my sums!" called out Edgar, the second boy.

"Mayn't I hem my duster?" pleaded Amy.

Honor smiled, and then bade them all come in quietly by and by. She only wanted to introduce a new friend to their mother, and then she would attend to them.

The outside of the house had prepared Dym for the total want of comfort and even cleanliness in the inside; but, as Miss Nethecote observed in a low voice,—

"How was a woman with bad health, and six children, and only one servant, to keep a place tidy and comfortable?"

Dym thought she would have managed better when she saw the living-room of the family. The muslin curtains were torn and soiled; the table-cover spotted with ink; lesson-books strewn hither and thither; a Noah's ark was on the floor; and a sickly-looking child lay fast asleep with a box of tin soldiers beside her and a headless doll hugged tightly in her arms. Honor picked her up, by way of beginning, and nearly crushed a farmyard and half a dozen ducks and geese; two or three trees crackled crisply under her feet.

Mrs. Grey lay on a couch at the end of the room, with a piled-up basket of mending beside her. A great boy of three was fretfully trying to clamber up in her lap, and a beautiful infant lay fast asleep in an old-fashioned cradle with rockers. Honor deposited the sleeping child carefully on the couch at the mother's feet, and, lifting the boy into her arms, and rocking the cradle at the same time, quietly introduced Dym.

"Now, Esther, you must cheer up; for I have brought Miss Elliott to talk to you."

"You have brought her into a sad untidy place, I am afraid; but I am very glad to see you, Miss Elliott, all the same. A new face is rather a treat in these parts: I never see any one but Honor—never."

"Except Mrs. Chichester and Mrs. Fortescue now and then, you mean. And you forget how kind Mrs. Trevor was last summer."

"Yes; but she has not been for a long time. I was only saying so to Edward this morning; but, as I told him, what inducement can any one have to come to such a place? Please sit down, Miss Elliott. I am afraid the children have littered all the chairs."

"She shall have mine, for I want to clear up the room; and then I have promised to take Rupert to his lessons. Miss Elliott, I believe you are fond of children: will you take poor Harry? he is not very well, and wants to be nursed." And, before Dym could answer, she found herself rocking the cradle, with a sleepy boy on her lap who took up all her attention.

"I am afraid he will tire you, Miss Elliott," observed his mother.

Mrs. Grey had a soft monotonous voice, with a fretful chord in it, like Harry's. Was this the woman that Honor liked best in Birstwith—better even than Mrs. Chichester and good-natured merry little Mrs. Trevor? Dym found herself wondering and watching her hostess between the intervals of rocking.

She was certainly an interesting-looking young woman. The shape of the face was almost as fine as Honor's, and she had large sad-looking brown eyes. Dym found out afterwards she had been a great beauty; but constant ill health had faded the fresh complexion, making her look sallow and older than her age. The pretty soft hair was thin, and brushed carelessly from the face, as though Esther Grey had ceased to care for her own good looks; and her dress was put on with the same negligence: the loose sleeves showed the white wasted arms pitiably, and Dym had quite shrunk from the touch of the thin hot fingers.

One thing she noticed: Mrs. Grey was evidently a fond mother; for her eyes brightened when Dym praised Harry's curly hair and commented on the beauty of the baby—another boy—and her voice lost a little of its dreary whine, as Rupert and Edgar came in with their hair nicely brushed and took their places at the table with Honor, while little Amy gathered up the remnant of the toys and then sat quietly to work on her duster.

"The children are all as good as gold when Honor is here," whispered Mrs. Grey. "And then she teaches them so beautifully. Rupert learns twice as fast with her as he does with me; and he is such a clever boy! I am afraid I haven't the right knack of teaching. He asks me questions, and that makes me nervous. I am a sad invalid, Miss Elliott."

Dym put a civil question or two, which soon brought out a whole list of ailments from the poor lady. Dym asked Miss Nethecote afterwards whether she really had all that matter with her, and was told very gravely in answer that she feared Mrs. Grey was very delicate. Dym grew to understand her interest in her after a time, when she knew both better.

Poor Esther Grey had married for love, very unwisely, as all her friends said; and, indeed, she little knew what was

before her when she accepted the young doctor, Edward Grey. "And she might have married any one," as one of them observed—a rich East India director, an uncle of Esther's, who had just died without leaving them a penny. But she was only eighteen; and Edward Grey was good-looking and very much in love; and everything went on as merrily as wedding-bells for the first two or three years. Esther was not a very good manager, but she looked wonderfully beautiful; and Mr. Grey was disposed to be lenient, and to think that she would do better as she grew older.

And doubtless this would have been the case if Esther had had a mother to advise her, or even had she known Honor sooner; but Mr. Grey had not yet begun to practice in Birstwith. The close street and the small house in the smoky suburb of Leeds began to oppress the young country beauty, the children came too fast, and the little household grew more pinched and straitened every day; Esther's fresh roses paled, her spirits declined, she grew wan and anxious, then fretful; naturally sweet-tempered and lymphatic, she soon ceased efforts that seemed unavailing, and before youth was past sank into a nervous invalid.

Most people pitied Mr. Grey, but in truth the fault lay on both sides. He was a clever, energetic man, indefatigable in his profession, and much loved by his patients; but as the years went on, transforming Esther from the petted wife into the harassed, worn-out mother, he was a little hard on her, his comfortless home was distasteful to him, he grew weary of constant complaints and ailments; at times when he came home jaded and weary, and needing those little nameless offices which wives generally delight to offer, he would speak almost roughly to her: "If you would make some effort, things would not be so shamefully neglected," he said sometimes. And so they grew apart. Esther was too gentle to retaliate, but her tears were the constant source of annoyance to her husband; in time she ceased to tell him of her nervous fancies, she began to suffer in silence; she never told him now what was the truth, that such efforts were beyond her. With the consciousness of failing strength there came a new, strange tenderness into her heart for the husband of her youth. "He will learn to hate me and to hate his home," she said once to Honor in the first days of their friendship; "and he used to

love it so. I believe he hardly cares to look at his children, because he thinks they are so neglected; he is working himself to death for us, and yet I never dare tell him so. Last night I could hardly sleep for watching him, he looked so gray and thin."

In those days Honor would preach patience and courage, she would bid Esther look her troubles boldly in the face, and rouse herself to do her daily work; but of late she had ceased wholly from such advice. Instead of that she would come almost daily and take tasks on herself, to spare Esther; the mending-baskets would dwindle down almost by miracle, though Grace Dunster and Phil could tell another tale. Rupert began to make progress with his lessons, and Amy at times was transformed into a neat-handed little maiden. Honor would brighten the whole household for a few hours, but of late there was always a lingering tenderness in her manner as she kissed Esther and wished her good-by, and often as she left the house she would sigh to herself and say, "Poor girl! poor Esther!"

Love begets love: a real warm affection will often grow out of mere pity and liking; we cannot help another without a strong interest springing up in our hearts for the object we have succored; the Samaritan, as he journeyed on, must often have thought of the man whose wounds he had just bound up with oil and wine.

Honor soon learned to love the woman who was leaning all her weary weight on her; she bore with her as patiently as though she were her own sister: the gentleness that failed to stir the husband's latent love irresistibly attracted Honor: presently, in the long watches beside Esther's bed, she discerned the feeble excellences and beauties of her nature. "I never knew a purer or more loving heart," she once said to Dym; "and by and by he will find it out; not that I blame him," she hastily added, with that sweet charity which was natural to her; "he has the hardest life a man can have, and Esther has never been to him the wife he needed."

Mr. Grey did not make his appearance that day till the luncheon was nearly over. He brightened up visibly when he saw Honor, and shook hands cordially with Miss Elliott, and even addressed his wife cheerfully.

He was a fair, gentlemanly man, but, although still young,

his hair was turning gray, and had worn perceptibly off the temples. There was an irritable look about the mouth, too, and the face was deeply lined. Dym liked him at once. "What a fine head he has, and what deep-set, thoughtful eyes!" she remarked to Honor, afterwards.

"Yes, he is very clever; a most intellectual man, as Mrs. Chichester says; but as blind as a bat in some things. There are eyes that can only see Africa," she added, laughing, in well-known reference to the immortal Mrs. Jellyby.

Dym could not see this at first. She thought Mr. Grey's manner very amiable to his wife and children. He took his place at the table with a little joke at Rupert's expense, and praised Honor's arrangement of the fruit and flowers. She little knew this was a gala day with him, poor man, whenever Honor was present. "How very good you are to us, Miss Nethecote!" he said, in a low voice, when late in the afternoon he walked with them to their own gate.

"Am I?" she returned, in her abrupt way. "Well, if you think so, I wonder if you will do me a favor in return?"

"A hundred, if you will," very warmly.

"Nay, one will do. You are a clever doctor, Mr. Grey, but you have sadly neglected one of your patients. Just go in now, and find out what is the matter with your wife."

They found Humphrey in his broad-brimmed hat, leaning against the garden-gate, watching for them.

"I thought you were never coming. You'll be late, surely, Duchess."

Honor gave a bright dissenting smile.

"I do not think so, dear; I shall only detain you a few minutes. Will you and Miss Elliott walk on?"

"I have promised to dine with Trevor, so you can put me out of your reckoning," returned Mr. Nethecote, rather more gruffly than usual.

Honor looked up in a little surprise.

"You did not tell me that before, Humphrey."

"Well, Duchess, what of that?"

"Only that I am sorry to go without you, dear," putting her hand on his arm and looking at him wistfully.

"Can't help it," still more abruptly. "The squire has not asked me, nor you either, I expect," wrinkling his brows hideously.

"I am going by Mrs. Chichester's invitation," replied Honor, calmly. "I am sorry you will not come with me, Humphrey."

"Better not," was the abrupt response. "When the squire is in this mood we might have words. If he had asked me, well and good—I never refused him anything, and I won't begin now; but Madam may keep her invitations for me."

Was good-natured Humphrey Nethecote cross or hurt? Dym wondered. Honor left him quietly after this rebuff. Perhaps the secret of her power over men—ay, and women too—was that she was so silent with them, speaking just to the purpose, and nothing more. "Women are too fond of trying to stop a leak with a word; I prefer deeds," she once said; and in very truth Honor was a woman of deeds.

She came down the garden a few minutes later, and beckoned to Dym. "We have no time to lose; good-night, Humphrey; give my love to Mrs. Trevor."

"We are both going the same way," replied her brother rather sulkily, as he prepared to accompany them.

"Always the same way, though we do sometimes take different turnings," assented Honor, fondly, as she took his arm. Dym marveled at the look that passed between the brother and sister; it made her think of Will with a sigh. Then she bethought herself how beautiful Honor looked; she wore a soft white dress of some clinging material, falling in close long folds, with a black lace shawl arranged as a mantilla.

"We shall meet nothing but cows till we get to Ingleside," she said, in answer to Dym's look of surprise.

But she was wrong; for in the last field they came upon the squire.

He was sitting on the stile, evidently enjoying the sunset, with his gun resting against his knee, and Kelpie sitting erect on his haunches, with his tongue lolling out and his eyes fixed eagerly on his master.

"There's a group for you," whispered Humphrey. "What a fine-looking man the squire is to be sure!" Honor dropped her brother's arm, and went forward alone. Dym could see the start of surprise and the sudden swarthy reddening of his brow as he saw her, and it struck her Honor looked just a little pale.

"Honor, is it you?" dropping his gun so hastily, as he rose, that its muzzle almost touched Honor's knee.

"That was very careless of you, Mr. Chichester," she observed, coolly, as he stooped in affright; "I shouldn't wonder if it were loaded, too."

Mr. Chichester's answer was to shoulder the gun and discharge its contents into a distant hedge; after which he restoaed it to its proper position, but Dym noticed that his hand trembled, and there was a frown on his face as he addressed Honor.

"Yes, there might have been an accident, and you would have been the cause of it," he said, almost angrily: "the old caliph was right when he insisted women were at the bottom of all mischief."

"A civil greeting, and evidently intended for me, Mr. Chichester."

"Why did you come upon me so suddenly?" he demanded; then looking at her from head to foot, "it is not often we see you in the home field at this time in the evening, and in a white dress, too."

"I am coming up to Ingleside to spend the evening."

"If it be not too rude a question, did you ask yourself, Miss Nethecote?"

"No, Mr. Chichester." There was something arch in Honor's face as she answered him.

"What has brought you, then?" he repeated, still more irritably.

Honor put her hand in his with a dignified frankness that was quite irresistible.

"Will you help me over the stile, please? Your mother is waiting dinner, I know. I will explain as we walk on."

How Dym longed to hear that explanation! Probably Humphrey walked slowly to give Honor her opportunity, for he lingered provokingly now and then to admire the prospect, and drove Dym nearly wild with a long dissertation on the architecture of some new schools the squire was building; he would persist in walking with her up the drive, though she told him twice Mr. Trevor's dinner-gong had sounded, and he was even longer than usual in shaking hands.

"I shall be too late to dress for dinner, and Mrs. Chichester is so particular," exclaimed poor Dym, in great vexation, as she ran up the terrace steps. She gave a great start as she turned the corner and saw Honor standing there alone: her attitude struck Dym as peculiar; her arms were hanging loosely

by her side, and her face had an unaccountable paleness on it. As she caught sight of Dym, she drew her breath with effort, and the color came back. Dym felt a little frightened.

"Are you well, Miss Nethecote?"

"Perfectly so," drawing up her head a little haughtily; "the squire has gone in to put away his gun. I was waiting for you. What a time you and Humphrey have been!"

"Yes, he was so tiresome," returned Dym, who was rather put out. Things were uncomfortable and mysterious, and she did not like it: why had Miss Nethecote influence with the squire? and why had he nearly shot her one minute and been angry with her the next? and why should she be standing all alone on the terrace?

Honor gave one of her slow curious smiles at the girl's honest confession.

"So Humphrey bores you sometimes, does he? He is a little heavy, but so good. Ah, no one knows the half of his goodness. But we must not be standing out here; let us go to Mrs. Chichester."

Dym never enjoyed a meal less than she did that dinner; never had a quartette been less harmonious. Before the first course was over, she longed for that tiresome Humphrey with all her heart. The squire especially seemed ill at ease; a certain excitement, usually foreign to him, was observable in his manners. He laughed and talked without ceasing, but the merriment was forced; now and then he made abrupt pauses, and looked scrutinizingly at Miss Nethecote.

Honor sat magnificent and silent; but now and then her hands were pressed closely together, and there was a firm closing of the beautiful lips, as though they had determined not to smile. Once when Mr. Chichester spoke very sharply, almost unnecessarily so, to Stewart, and the poor lad colored up painfully, she looked full at him, and then dropped her white lids and said nothing; a few minutes afterwards Guy called the boy gently to him, and bade him leave the room.

Just then Mrs. Chichester gave the signal for rising.

"You may send my coffee into the library, mother," Guy said, as he opened the door for them to pass; and Dym, as she drew back to let Miss Nethecote precede her, heard him whisper, "One turn on the terrace, Honor;" but Miss Nethecote shook her head.

"We have talked too long already, Mr. Chichester," standing up very straight and tall before him.

The squire bit his lip.

"But if I promise to reconsider my decision?" and, as she hesitated, "Mother, I have some papers to look over before to-morrow's post, and to settle a little matter in which Miss Nethecote has been pleased to interest herself; we will join you in the drawing-room by and by."

"Very well, Guy." Then, as Honor still lingered, the squire touched her hand lightly, and said, in a tone Dym had never heard before, "Come, Honor, come;" and Honor yielded.

Dym followed Mrs. Chichester into the drawing-room. The windows were opened on to the terrace; the white China lamps were lighted; there was a soft halo of light round Mrs. Chichester, as she sat in her low chair and knitted placidly; a dusky moth brushed round the light; a bat wheeled suddenly in the darkness; there was a soft perfume of flowers. Dym, stealing to the window with a strange unknown pain at her heart, saw Honor's white dress on the dark terrace-path below, and heard the squire's tones as they passed and repassed the window.

"Come, my dear, we will have a little reading. I have missed you sadly to-day." Another time these words would have sounded sweet to the girl, whom nobody but Will ever seemed to miss; but to-night she obeyed the summons impatiently; a jarring chord had been touched; a sudden secret sting betrayed the existence of Dym's old enemy.

Honor's presence at Ingleside somehow disturbed her.

"He has not spoken a word to me to-night. I am nothing —nothing to him," she cried, rebelliously, as she took the book.

"Are you tired, my dear? there is something *triste* in your voice," said Mrs. Chichester, whose acute ear had missed the genuine ring of enjoyment in the girl's monotonous tones.

"I don't know. I think I want Will to-night." And, to her own surprise as well as Mrs. Chichester's, Dym suddenly burst into tears.

"Shut your book, my dear; come here to me," said her tender mistress. She stroked the girl's hair softly with motherly touches as Dym crouched on the floor beside her. I

do not know what pain, what infinite trouble suddenly swelled Dym's poor little heart to bursting; Dym had no words to express it; she could not tell his mother that Mr. Chichester was her friend, and that she was nothing to him. She only felt sad and forlorn all at once, like a child who wanted to be petted.

"If he would only say a kind word to me sometimes as he used," she thought, as she laid her head against Mrs. Chichester's satin gown; "he has been so strange, so unlike himself, of late. Oh, if we could only have one of the old evenings in Paradise Row back again, I should be quite content."

Quite content! Poor Dym.

Little did she know how soon the "sweet summer of her content" would be overcast—when she should rue her woman's bitter knowledge, and pray for peace as one prays for salvation, only to come to it through the tears of a long pain.

But they who glean the aftermath must look on happy harvest-fields that others have reaped; and youth, though not the perpetual sunshine that poets will have it, or the perennial bulbul in bowers of roses, still wears its bandage of ignorance blissfully, and so the salt waves lap to its very feet before it says, "Alas me, for my trouble is upon me!"

So Dym cried, she hardly knew for what reason, except for home-sickness and Will, and a longing for kind words from lips she had learned to revere. And Mrs. Chichester petted and made much of her, and called Dorothy to administer drops of red lavender for the vapors, for so she had called them in her youth; and Dym dried her eyes and let herself be comforted, and held up her face like a very child to be kissed; and neither of them knew that a chord had been touched that night which in the years to come would swell into an infinite diapason that would fill all her woman's universe with happiness or woe.

Dym was a little ashamed of her outbreak, and wanted to go on with her book by and by; but Mrs. Chichester would not let her. "Tell me about your day instead, my dear." And Dym was beginning rather a lame narrative, when Mr. Chichester came in alone.

"What a time you have been, Guy! and where is Honor?"

"She is just speaking to Stewart in the library. Mother,"

kneeling on one knee on her footstool and laying forcible hands on her knitting, "mother, I have been a brute to you these last few days."

Mrs. Chichester laid her hand fondly on her son's shoulder, and the color came into her faded cheek. Guy's bearded lips touched the thin hand almost reverently before he took it in his own.

"Come, mother, confess I have been horribly churlish."

"My darling boy!" and then her glance added, "but we are not alone."

Dym had one of his old looks then.

"What, are you there, Miss Elliott? I did not see you. Well, as you have been the witness of my rudeness to my mother, you ought to hear my apology too. We don't mind Miss Elliott, do we, mother? she is a harmless little thing."

How the harmless little thing quivered and crimsoned under the old kind smile and words!

"She has been fretting, Guy. I don't think she has been well to-night: she wants her brother," explained Mrs. Chichester, anxious to turn her son's attention from herself.

"What, Will Clericus? I shall be seeing him next week. What will you give me, Miss Elliott, if I bring him back with me?"

Dym clasped her hands.

"Oh, do, please, Mr. Chichester," she cried, fervently.

He laughed, and then his tone changed.

"What, are you so home-sick and Will-sick as all that, poor child? What have you been doing with her, mother?"

But Mrs. Chichester's face had grown anxious again.

"Oh, Guy, you are not going up to London?"

"We will talk about that presently, *mère chérie*. Are you sure you have forgiven me?"

"My dearest boy, pray do not talk so!" her hand wandering lovingly in the thick long beard. Certainly in any woman's eye Guy Chichester would have been a son of whom to be proud. It was touching to see the strong, stalwart figure in that boyish attitude. In spite of the light manner, the brown face looked troubled and agitated, and the honest eyes were full of pain.

"Guy, for my sake, please do not talk so."

"It is all my cursed temper. I ought not to have plagued

you about that boy. I can see it has made you ill. Never mind, mother, I have repealed the sentence."

"Thank you, my dear. But, Guy," hesitating, as though not sure of her ground, "must you, will you go to London?"

"Yes, mother, I must," an emphasis on the words, and rising abruptly.

Mrs. Chichester sighed, but did not dare to press the point; and a moment after Honor came in very silently and seated herself by Dym.

Mr. Chichester moved restlessly about the room, taking up articles and putting them down again; and then he muttered something about his papers, and left the room; and soon after that Honor rose and said "Good-by."

She bent down to kiss Mrs. Chichester rather reluctantly, as though constrained by her hand: her eyes had a weary light in them; she looked pale, almost ill.

"You have succeeded; thank you, Honor," observed Mrs. Chichester, gratefully; but Miss Nethecote put out her hand with an abrupt gesture as though to stop her.

"No, don't thank me. I always said I would do anything to help you. Why," as Mrs. Chichester tried to speak, "I would do as much as that for my enemy."

"Am I your enemy, Honor?" very sadly.

"God knows!" returned Miss Nethecote, rather wildly: they had both forgotten Dym's presence, and now she quietly stole from the room; "sometimes I think you are all my enemies, for you have robbed me of my peace among you."

"You have not forgiven me, then," reproachfully, "or him either."

"Have I not?" returned Honor, almost inaudibly; "then I trust that I may never be forgiven. Poor Guy! poor Guy!" in a tone of ineffable gentleness.

"Then why is Guy's mother so hateful to you?" pleaded Mrs. Chichester, wistfully, as she looked up at the majestic young figure beside her. There was something almost sublime in Honor's attitude; but as Mrs. Chichester spoke the sweetness and calm suddenly broke up.

"No, not hateful. Why do you speak so?" she exclaimed, hurriedly; "do you know the name I might have called you? For your son's sake, if not for mine, never say that again. But all the same," relapsing into mournfulness, "you are not my friend."

"Why not, Honor?"

"Was it my friend to bring me face to face with him this night, of all nights in the year? When you knew, you saw that he remembered it, was it generous," with a sudden spasm of pain on her beautiful face, "to make me come here and plead for another, when he could not plead for himself? Hush," stooping down and kissing her again, as Mrs. Chichester's lip trembled; "you could not help it: you only think of him, never of me."

"Oh, Honor, if you would only think of him too!" but at the stern set look of Honor's mouth she stopped.

"Think! and have I not thought? Ah, you are no friend of mine, or you would not subject me to this. Do you know these things are killing me, actually killing me, who thought myself too strong to suffer," she added, with a dreary smile.

"Forgive me, Honor," replied Mrs. Chichester, humbly. "Let us say no more. I never meant to pain you like this."

"I have betrayed myself," returned Honor, putting her hand to her breast. "I never meant to speak to his mother in this way—never. Why will you not understand that I must come and go at my own will, not at his or yours?"

"I thought you had learned to be happy here again," faltered Mrs. Chichester.

"Happy! do you know I was madly, foolishly happy when he was talking to me just now? The very sound of his voice, the touch of his hand, makes me happy. I like to see my influence over him, and to know he will never forget me—never, never. Ah," hiding her face in her hands, "ought I to come here with these feelings? Mrs. Chichester, you must be generous and release me."

"I cannot, Honor. What should I do without you sometimes?"

"When I promised to come up here when you or he were in trouble, I never thought how he would try my resolution. He is not generous, either. In my moments of weakness he comes to me. Did you hear how he called me Honor to-night?"

"The old habit is too strong for him, I suppose."

"It is too strong for both of us. I have forbidden it, but he refuses to obey me. To-night the tenderness of his tone almost constrained me to cry out to him to stop. Oh," weep-

ing as though her heart would break, "to feel that I could follow him through the world cheerfully, oh, so cheerfully, and yet not to dare to trust him again!"

"Honor, why will you persist in this? Guy is a changed man now."

"I know it. Perhaps I see it, too. No, Mrs. Chichester, don't tempt me. Where he has not succeeded you will not. You are a good woman, you mean well, but I cannot trust him yet. Besides," in a firmer voice, "I have promised Humphrey."

"But you will not wait long, Honor?"

"That will depend. Sometimes I think that Guy and I are not meant for happiness. Ah, now you have made me cry, and Humphrey will be angry. He always watches my face when I have been here. Good-night, Mrs. Chichester."

"Good-night, Honor. I am afraid I have been a little hard on you, after all."

"You did not mean to be. I have not been good to-night. I am not a saint yet, you see." And with a mournful smile Honor left the room.

Mrs. Chichester rocked herself to and fro with an agitated face when she was left alone. "No, I am not her friend. I cannot love her. She is right. My poor boy! But they will never come together—never! To-night he could scarcely control himself, even in her presence. He is wasting his whole life, but he will never win her again. God help them both! I believe she would rather die than give up her own will."

The next morning, when Dym arose, somewhat unrefreshed and heavy-eyed, from her slumber, she learned that the squire had already left Ingleside and was *en route* for London.

And soon after that she heard Miss Nethecote had been ill, and was going to spend a few weeks with her brother in Scotland.

CHAPTER XIV.

HUMPHREY'S WOOING.

It was the middle of October when Guy Chichester left his home so abruptly. Dym wondered why his mother should fret so over a few days' absence. She had no idea that they would not see his face again till the Christmas bells sounded over the little valley.

Dym never called it the Happy Valley now; some brief mood of discontent was sweeping over our little heroine. Cinderella, in her prosperity, almost quarreled with the magic wand that had transformed her. The cinder-wench, as the old Teutonic legends termed her, was sighing for her bed among the ashes again. The roses and sunshine had come into Dymphna Elliott's life; she fared softly, though her bread was the bread of dependence; she wore pretty tasteful dresses; she reveled in sweets and flowers; she drove out every day in a fine coach; even the pumpkin chariot had come to her; she had plenty of affection, no stint of indulgence and caresses; yet there were times when Dym's heart ached, and she wondered if she had not happier thoughts when she sat on the throne of boxes in the little garret at Lansdowne House, looking out over the house-tops to the green shimmering park beyond.

Dym had not yet rid herself of the unreality of her girlish dreams. She was still too dreamy and imaginative for practical life.

"You are enjoying too much of the *dolce far niente*," Will wrote once, when some trace of this vague discontent had made itself felt in her letter. "You have not enough to do, pet, and are growing fanciful again. I wish I could draft you off to St. Luke's for a few weeks, and give you some hard, rousing work to do. Your squire, as you call him, is doing the work of ten men among us. I can't half tell you how glad I am to get him back again."

How Dym sighed over that letter! A visit to St. Luke's, ay, even one talk with Will, would have healed the brief dis-

temper. Mrs. Chichester was a very gentle companion, but Dym found even gentleness tedious at times. She wanted work, variety, plenty of occupation. The monotony, the ceaseless routine of letter-writing, useful reading, and endless knitting and wool-work, chafed and wearied her. She would have worked her fingers to the bone out of pure love and gratitude to Mrs. Chichester. Yet there were times when she would rather have been at Woodside slaving among the children, and listening to the long list of Mrs. Grey's ailments, than be sitting in that stately drawing-room.

Perhaps in the squire's absence Ingleside was a somewhat quiet abode for a young active girl. Dym, who was determined to be good, generally cured her irritability by taking Kelpie for a long run across the darkening November fields. The cold air quickened the young blood in her veins, and freshened her up for the long evenings.

Very often she met Humphrey returning from the home farm with Kiddle-a-wink at his heels. Humphrey would look pleased as the little figure in the Scotch tweed came running towards him in the twilight. Dym's large dark eyes would light up with merriment when she saw him. She and Humphrey had become fast friends. "What a child you are to be running with that dog!" he would say, taking her little hand with clumsy gentleness. One day he brought her a beautiful pheasant's wing to adorn her new hat. "It will just match your dress. You will be a regular Brownie then," he said one day.

"Do the Brownies haunt the fields on November evenings?" exclaimed Dym. "Brownies and Kelpies—I wonder you are not afraid of such tricksy spirits, Mr. Nethecote."

Humphrey laughed, but somehow the name ever afterwards clung to her.

Honor had not come home with her brother; a cousin of theirs, almost the only relation they had still belonging to them, had been lately widowed, and Honor had for a little while assumed the management of the bereaved household.

"She will come home directly I send for her," said Humphrey, ruefully, one day when he had been somewhat bemoaning his dulness; they had met at the stile as usual, which might have been christened "the trysting place," only Dym was too innocent to perceive that design, and not accident,

brought honest Humphrey so often across her path; "it is not that I don't want her, for the Cottage is sadly lonesome without the Duchess, but I think the change is doing her good, and it is early days to leave poor Helen."

"Why don't you come up and see us sometimes? I am sure Mrs. Chichester and I find it dull enough," owned the girl, frankly—she made Humphrey laugh at her description of the state and loneliness of their evenings at Ingleside.

"We have all the courses just as though the squire were here, and we always pass them as a matter of course," went on Dym, dryly; "sometimes the vicar and Mrs. Fortescue come up to dinner, and then we have wax candles in the drawing-room instead of the white china lamps; but it is just as dull—the vicar always goes to sleep, and wakes up with an apology when the coffee comes in, and Mrs. Fortescue plays the same pieces over and over again; and when I am tired of yawning," finished naughty Dym, "I pick up Mrs. Chichester's dropped stitches and go to bed."

Humphrey gave one of his great hearty laughs over the girl's sarcasm; Dym chattered nonsense to him quite frankly now. The result of this conversation was that Humphrey came up to Ingleside the very next evening, and listened to Dym's reading, and made himself so agreeable that Mrs. Chichester gave him a general invitation during his sister's absence, of which he was not slow to avail himself. Dym honestly owned she was glad of this addition to their party; she read with greater zest when Humphrey was there to point out the jests with his gruff laugh. Mr. Nethecote was not intellectual, but he made very shrewd remarks at times. Dym, when she laid down her book, would direct a brisk little artillery of conversation against him, that first amused and then somewhat scandalized Mrs. Chichester.

"My dear, you must remember Mr. Nethecote is not forty yet," she said, once; "you talk to him sometimes as though he were quite an elderly man."

Mrs. Chichester did not quite explain her meaning, and Dym only laughed off the rebuke; it never entered her head that her dark eyes and winsome face might become dangerously attractive to the worthy Yorkshireman. Dym would have tossed her pretty little head in scorn at such a notion. It was all very well for Mrs. Chichester to represent Humphrey as a sort of

middle-aged youth; eighteen has its own ideas on the subject of forty: she persisted in treating Mr. Nethecote as though he were a favorite uncle or grandfather, all the more that he called her Brownie openly and met all her jests with the same good-humored tolerance.

"Brownies must play their tricks," he said, once, when Dym had been teasing him for a whole evening, and Mrs. Chichester had at last gently called her to order. Mrs. Chichester began to smile quietly to herself as she rattled her knitting-needles.

"Nothing could be better—these sort of girls generally prefer a man much older than themselves," she thought. "She will tease him into brightness, and then make him happy in the end: what a good husband he will make her!"

Mr. Chichester laughed out loud over the next letter he received from Ingleside.

"Why is a good woman always a match-maker, I wonder? Do you know, my mother thinks she has found an excellent husband for your sister?" and as William Elliott looked up in astonishment, "Fancy Miss Elliott with a sober middle-aged lover of forty odd—Humphrey Nethecote, too; the most confirmed old bachelor in the whole of the three Ridings. I wonder whether my mother has a grain of probability in her fancy. Humphrey Nethecote—ha, ha!" and Mr. Chichester threw back his head, thoroughly tickled at the idea.

Will laughed, but he was rather pleasantly excited too; he made Mr. Chichester give him the whole history of Humphrey's antecedents.

"I don't know but what it might be a good thing, only the child is so absurdly young," he said, presently; but Mr. Chichester did not relax his air of amusement.

"Wait till you see them together first. I don't believe there's a word of truth in the whole story; Humphrey is too good for her—he would bore her to death in the first twelvemonth. Fancy a pretty little sparkling thing like that mated with Humphrey's slow wits. Well, not pretty, exactly," as Will brightened up at this unexpected praise, "but taking, piquante. She'd better wait for a few years, and she'll find some one more to her liking."

"I am afraid of Dym," replied her brother, slowly; those sort of natures are seldom happy. "Now that this subject

has been started, I wish you would tell me honestly if Dym really satisfies your mother."

"As far as I know, she does so entirely," replied Mr. Chichester, frankly; "my mother is wonderfully well pleased with her; but, to tell you the truth, I do not think she has seemed quite so happy of late."

"How so?" demanded Will, anxiously.

Mr. Chichester shrugged his shoulders.

"You know there are some children who are unreasonable enough to cry for the moon. I fancy your sister has one of these insatiable natures. She has too much mercury in her composition, is easily pleased and easily depressed: to look at her sometimes, no one would believe she has a temper, and yet one would never be surprised at an outbreak."

Either Dym had an eloquent face, or Mr. Chichester read human nature too shrewdly, and in his own sadness found time to notice the passing clouds on a girl's brow.

Will sighed, for he knew from past experience this description was true.

"I have sent her to the right place to be broken in," he said, with a smile. "Your mother's kindness will soften the hard places wonderfully; the poor child has been sadly knocked about, and has grown willful with rough usage. I shall never be sufficiently grateful that she was placed under such loving protection."

"Broken in!" How little did William Elliott know how truly his words would be fulfilled. Poor little Dym! Ah, in the long years to come, who would have recognized in the sweet-faced gentle woman the dreamy enthusiastic girl with the dark spirituelle eyes and quick vivacity, that could amuse herself at the expense of others, and laugh and cry in a breath?

Mr. Chichester never discussed the merits and demerits of his *protégée* again with her brother, and though Humphrey Nethecote was the principal topic in many succeeding letters, the subject was not revived between them. The squire was too preoccupied and ill at ease to take much interest in a girl's love-affair; his friendship with Will was as warm and unimpaired as ever, but he was as taciturn and sparing in his confidence as in the days when he was only Mr. Latimer.

As for Dym, she moped and brightened alternately at her

own sweet will, in blissful ignorance of what Mrs. Chichester persisted in regarding as "the wooing o't;" but perhaps her denseness might be excused, for in a girl's eyes nothing could be more unlike a conventional wooer; and, to tell the truth, she was far too much absorbed in her hero-worship to tolerate, or even suspect, commonplace courting.

The squire's letters did much to reconcile her to his absence. Guy was a generous correspondent, and reported all his doings dutifully to his mother; and, as there was always a kindly mention of Dym at the end, she was more than satisfied.

"Tell Miss Elliott that I have done my best, but that Will Clericus has decided to be immolated on the shrine of duty, and will not leave St. Luke's at present," he wrote, once; and another time he discharged himself of a lengthy message Edith had sent to her *pro tem.* governess. "I suppose Miss Elliott will not be interested in the details of her enemy's wedding," he finished in another paragraph, "so keep the description of the dresses to yourself, mother. Mrs. Vivian shed plenty of crocodile tears, but Aunt Celia was too much afraid of spoiling her green moire antique; she told me how much a yard it was, and how grieved she was at your absence, in one breath."

"Why did you not go to the wedding, Mrs. Chichester?" asked Dym, with some natural surprise—she knew Mrs. Tressilian was her only sister. Mrs. Chichester drew herself up a little stiffly.

"Beatrix is my niece, it is true; but she is no favorite of mine: she behaved very badly when she was down here, only Guy chooses to ignore it. Ah, my dear, men are all alike, they forgive a pretty woman anything; but for my part I pity Colonel Delaire."

Dym's assent was decidedly vehement.

"He is such a handsome man—a capital officer, too: all the regiment speak well of him. Was it true that Miss Tressilian wanted him to sell out?"

"I believe so," was the reluctant answer. She did not choose to tell her eager listener that Beatrix had nearly broken off the whole affair when he refused, and was only roused to a sense of her dishonorable conduct by her cousin's quiet scorn. Guy had been Colonel Delaire's friend all through; the wedding, and not St. Luke's, had really detained him in London; there was no end to the torment Beatrix inflicted

on the unfortunate bridegroom elect; she trifled, she delayed, on one pretext or other, till, with the late autumn, Mr. Chichester came up at his aunt's request to talk her into acquiescence. "No woman has a right to treat a man so," he said to her, with salutary sternness. "Either you are engaged to Frank and must marry him, in reasonable time, or, as your guardian, I insist that you at once break with him."

Guy Chichester's guardianship had virtually ceased with Beatrix; but he still had some right of control over her property, certain matters being intrusted to him by his uncle's will until such time when the two remaining daughters should marry or attain their twenty-fifth year.

"You must give Frank and me an answer to-morrow," he returned. "I am sorry to tell you, Beatrix, that your conduct to him displeases me greatly; if you have ceased to care for the man, why not give him up?"

But Beatrix would not give him up; he was well connected and of good family; he had excellent prospects, and she had been formally congratulated by all her friends. Perhaps her cousin's coldness settled her in this decision, for he was thoroughly offended, and would pay her no sort of attention, lavishing all his fondness on Edith, till she almost hated the child, and abandoning her to Colonel Delaire's tender mercies.

And how tender they were no one but Beatrix knew! Frank Delaire was madly in love with his reluctant bride. By and by Beatrix made a virtue of necessity, and yielded at last with a very bad grace. She made Guy promise to give her away, and fixed an early date to prevent his leaving London.

"Frank and I are going to pay our promised visit to Ingleside in the spring," she said, as she stepped into the traveling-carriage that was to take her away. The deed was done. Beatrix looked pale, but wonderfully composed and very beautiful, as Guy wrote word to his mother; but he hinted outright that Frank was a noble fellow and deserved a better wife. "It was a wretched affair; a *mariage de convenance;* thoroughly heartless, like Beatrix herself. I am glad, after all, you did not come to it, mother: it has sickened me of London life completely."

"Thoroughly heartless. Beatrix never cared but for one person in all her life. Poor Colonel Delaire, indeed!" ejaculated Mrs. Chichester, as she folded up the letter. Beatrix

was her sister's child, and it was very unsatisfactory. Mrs. Chichester had old-fashioned notions on the subject of love and marriage, which would hardly have accorded with her niece's ideas. She turned with a sort of relief to Humphrey's homely courtship, which would probably be as slow and steady as old Time itself. "He has given her a posy. I suppose he will propose about next Christmas twelvemonth, unless Honor takes the matter into her own hand," thought Mrs. Chichester, with unconscious irony.

Dym received one brief note from Honor before November was quite over.

"If your face does not belie you, you have a good heart," wrote Miss Nethecote, in her brief, business-like way. "I wish you would exercise it a little, and go and see Mrs. Grey sometimes."

Dym showed the missive to Mrs. Chichester, who smiled, and said, "Just like Honor; she always wants to set other people to work."

"I have not enough to do," argued Dym, a little sadly with herself. "Will always said the more I widened my interest the more I should forget myself. I think, Kelpie, we had better go."

The next evening Humphrey turned away from the stile with an odd feeling of disappointment, for no slight young figure came through the gloom; the lights were burning in the cottage windows; the chimes from the little church rang crisply through the air. Humphrey walked back disconsolately, thinking his Duchess had been away a long time, and that his fireside was growing very lonely, when, near his own gate, something came bounding and leaping upon him, and a moment after a little cloaked figure stole to his side.

"You did not expect to see me here, did you, Mr. Nethecote?" laughing as she spoke.

"I suppose Brownies do play unexpected tricks sometimes," returned Humphrey, feeling strangely happy all at once. Dym's face looked dimpled and rosy; one lock of hair had escaped and lay in natural curl on her shoulder—even the squire must have owned she looked pretty.

"I have been playing with the children—oh, such a romp, and they have pulled my hair down," trying to tuck it up under the pheasant feather. "Such dear children! I like Rupert

nearly as well as my favorite Berwick. I have been there all the afternoon."

"What has Mrs. Chichester done without you?" asked Mr. Nethecote. Something made his voice sound unusually gruff; he was tired with a long day's work, nevertheless he turned back and walked with her to Ingleside. The lights in the village burne mored brightly now: as they came up to the stile, he stopped to bid Dym admire the young crescent of a moon.

"How delicious this cold air is—it has made me hungry for dinner!" cried Dym, who was in excellent spirits and saw beauty in everything. She parted from Humphrey without one thought of his long dark walk alone. The patient man set his face homeward, and plodded back through the wind again; these middle-aged lovers have a wonderful constancy and perseverance of their own.

I suppose Humphrey, in his secret soul, feared his suit might be hopeless; but he was a strong, silent man, and given to much quiet determination of purpose. "She is young and weak, and some day she may need the protection of an honest man," he said to himself. He held to this thought with a strange tenacity through the girl's fitful humors. "It is not likely a soft little creature as she is will fancy such a plain, homely fellow at once; but one day perhaps, when she is lonely and knows me better, she may let me take her home."

And this was the beginning of the slow wooing which every one perceived long before Dym herself was startled by it. Dym found her second visit to Mrs. Grey so welcome that she repeated it on every leisure afternoon. It was not very easy to replace Honor; but she began to make her own mark in the neglected household. Rather hesitatingly she volunteered small services, which were eagerly accepted. Rupert had his Latin lessons again; with the others Dym was only a playmate, but she was very bright and useful, and won Mrs. Grey's heart by her ready sympathy. One thing she noticed, as she told Honor afterwards: Mr. Grey was not less irritable, but he was very kind and attentive to his wife.

"I saw him sit beside her sofa for a long time, watching her when she was asleep, one evening. When he went out, I am sure there were almost tears in his eyes. I can't think what makes him so gentle to her; for she is more ailing and fretful than usual."

It had come into Dym's mind to write this to Honor. She scrawled a long letter to her when she was sitting on the rug one evening in the twilight, waiting for Esther to wake. Miss Nethecote sent a short hearty note of thanks by the next post.

"Your letter has done me good," she wrote; "it brought a strong sweet whiff of the Happy Valley with it. I am afraid I am growing homesick and selfish; only pray do not tell Humphrey so. Dear Miss Elliott, I am beginning to look upon you as a friend. I rather suspect there is some sort of elective affinity between us. Is that romantic enough to suit you? Anyhow, write to me whenever you feel charitably disposed, and tell me how Humphrey looks. From what you tell me of affairs at Woodside, I am afraid Esther is decidedly worse, and her husband knows it. When will the squire come back to his own?—Yours, HONOR."

This second brief note made Dym very happy. She wrote again, and then again—brisk little dispatches, full of Birstwith gossip. Dym had a clever racy humor of her own. Honor's letters were rather ponderous beside them; they were like her talk—quiet, and to the point.

"I wish the squire would come back to his own," Dym thought to herself, as she returned from Woodside rather later than usual one evening. Mrs. Chichester was dining at the vicarage. Mrs. Fortescue, who entertained somewhat conventional ideas about companions and dependants in general, very rarely included Miss Elliott in these invitations.

The vicar, who had taken a fancy to Dym's bright eyes and quiet ladylike manners, once remonstrated with his wife on the subject.

"It must be very dull for the poor little thing, being with Aunt Constance morning, noon, and night. I think, when Guy is away, you might safely ask her sometimes, Katherine. She is a great favorite with Berwick."

"It will only be taking her out of her place. Aunt Constance makes an unnecessary fuss over her already," returned his wife, dryly. "I have no opinion of Aunt Constance's prudence in the matter. I hear she insisted on taking her one evening to Mrs. Trevor's, and young Trelawney flirted dreadfully with her."

"No one will flirt with her here, my dear," replied the vicar, mildly; "Berwick is too young."

"Perhaps not, Latimer; but I cannot say that I care for Miss Elliott; she is not respectful enough in her manners. Why, she was almost rude to me one day when I gave her a little advice about this same George Trelawney. 'If I flirted, it would not be with boys,' she said, with such a toss of her head. And I am sure she is not particularly good-looking, and might be supposed to be grateful for a little admiration; and George, though he is stupid, is as rich as Crœsus. But I suppose she has other game; these girls are so sly," finished Katherine, with a superb sweep of her dress across the drawing-room.

Guy Chichester was right when he shrewdly argued that Mrs. Fortescue ruled with a rod of iron. Latimer Fortescue was too indolent to contest his wife's will in trifles, though now and then he would electrify the household by suddenly assuming the reins of government, and would prove himself both stern and despotic; but these occasions were rare. Katherine had seldom to cower beneath her husband's wrath, though report said she could be meek enough at these times.

Mr. Fortescue said nothing more about Miss Elliott's dullness at the Great House; but he was always very civil to her when he visited there. Perhaps he would hardly have been so polite if he had known Dym always called him "the marble priest; he polishes up his sermons till there is not a point left in them; they could not cut or touch one anywhere. Will is a rough diamond compared with him," as she told Honor, one day. But, with all his pride, she preferred him infinitely to his wife, whom she detested with an honesty that amused the squire greatly.

Mrs. Chichester was, as usual, dining alone at the vicarage; and Dym had taken advantage of her absence to pay a long visit to Woodside. There had been a heavy fall of snow all the afternoon. It was Christmas-eve; Mrs. Fortescue and her party—a few lively young girls, London cousins—had been putting up wreaths of evergreens in the church all day; but, in spite of Mrs. Chichester's hint, Dym had not been asked to join the decorators.

Dym, who loved this special work, was a little disappointed and put out; Miles and Stewart and the female servants were

busily working up at the Great House; and she decided to vent her spleen on turning the sitting-room at Woodside into a perfect bower of holly. She kept this sturdy resolution, to the great delight of Rupert and Edgar, and even Mr. Grey himself; he came in from his rounds rubbing his hands from the cold, and exclaimed loudly at the unwonted sight.

"Doesn't it look pretty, Edward?" said his wife; and there was actually a smile on her lips as she spoke. "The children say Miss Elliott is another Santa Claus, now Honor is away. And look what Honor has sent us," she continued, with tears in her eyes, as she showed her husband the little pile of winter garments Honor's kindly fingers had sewn for them. "And Mrs. Chichester has sent us a turkey, and Mr. Nethecote a hare and some game; and Mrs. Trevor has put up such a hamper of good things for the children."

"They are all very good," returned Mr. Grey, in a subdued voice. For a little while the lines left his face, as he sat holding his wife's hand and watching the workers. Dym was a little pale with her labors as she wished them good-night. She had been hammering lustily with a heavy heart all the afternoon.

"Ah, when will he come to his own again?" she repeated, mournfully, as she called Kelpie and went out into the cold dark road. The snow had ceased falling, and lay deep and thick on the untrodden fields; Kelpie bounded on, and rolled over and over on the crisp white bed; but Dym shivered and drew the gray cloak closer round her.

"I shall not enjoy Christmas-day one bit without him and Will." And then she gave a quick impatient exclamation, as a dark figure raised itself slowly from the stile.

"One gets tired of always seeing you there," she said, pettishly, as Kelpie darted forward with a bark of delight.

"*Qui va là?* give me the watchword, Miss Elliott," returned a delightfully familiar voice; but not in Humphrey's gruff accents—neither was it Humphrey's loose angular figure that suddenly barred her way.

Something warm and electric ran through Dym's frame at the sound of that voice.

"*Qui patitur vincit!*" came in a sweet little voice, which was hardly as strong as usual. Was it excess of happiness that made Dym's tones so trembling?

"What made you think of that?" returned Guy, somewhat abruptly, as he lifted her over the stile, and they walked on together.

"It is the motto of the Elliotts as well as the Chichesters," replied Dym, softly. "'He conquers who endures;' it was quoting that that first made me call him Will Conqueror. Ah, Mr. Chichester, you have seen Will—how does he look?"

"Passably well—not a giant, perhaps. Strange that you should have said those words, and at this very spot too. Miss Elliott, do you believe in omens?"

"I am afraid I do."

"Don't be afraid," he replied, warmly: "if I may accept this as an omen, you have made my welcome home a sweet one."

"Have I, Mr. Chichester?"

"Yes, my child."

He had never called her that before; and there was a gentle affectionate tone in his voice as he spoke. Was he glad to see her? Dym thought that he was. The wind blew coldly from the hills, and a few more flakes were falling; but Dym did not shiver now; she had forgotten the cold and the darkness as she followed the tracks Guy Chichester made in the snow.

"Tread thou in my footsteps boldly. Do you feel like good King Wenceslaus's page, Miss Elliott? I won't promise you that you will not feel the cold any longer, though." And as Dym laughed, "By the by, for whom was that amiable greeting intended when you came up to me just now?"

"Not for you, Mr. Chichester. Ah, I am so glad you have come home!" *Loyal je serai durant ma vie* might have been Dym's motto. She brought out her words with a great sigh of relief.

If Mr. Chichester was surprised at the girl's enthusiasm, he kept it to himself. "Poor child, have you been dull?" he said, in the same kindly paternal tone. "What has my mother been about, I wonder? She ought to have taken you to the vicarage."

"Mrs. Fortescue did not ask me," was the low response.

"So I suspected. Ah, well, Katherine has not found her Petruchio yet. Latimer is not a good shrew-tamer. I must give her ladyship a hint on the subject one of these days."

"Oh, please do not, Mr. Chichester. I am far happier at

Inglesido. I know Mrs. Fortescue does not like me," implored Dym, somewhat frankly.

"My cousin Katherine has her whims, as other people have. As I intend that you shall be received into Birstwith society, and her ladyship aspires to the leadership of that society, I shall see that this negligence is repaired." Dym never dared to contradict when the squire spoke in this severe tone; he was evidently displeased at his cousin's haughtiness; but when he next spoke he had resumed his tone of pleasant raillery.

"So you don't like the vicarage, eh?"

"I never feel at home there," was the honest answer.

"Latimer is kind to you, isn't he?"

"As kind as he knows how to be. He chills one a little. I like the boys best."

"They have a lot of young people with them to-night. I came up with Trevor, and he told me he and his wife were going up to supper after service. The boys are going to play snapdragon, much to the vicar's disgust. Don't you think it is a shame to marry a clergyman and to act contrary to his opinions?"

"Mrs. Fortescue thinks eves and vigils are popish," returned Dym, wickedly.

"I know she does. Latimer will shut himself up in his study and make believe he is studying his Christmas sermon. Lat is a good fellow, and hates making a fuss; and, after all, there is no sin in snapdragon."

"I think they ought all to go to church if he wishes it," returned Dym, with a little decision.

"Why aren't you there, then, instead of roaming about the fields and addressing uncivil speeches to some persons unknown? You have not told me yet whom you are so tired of seeing."

Dym felt rather foolish at this question: was the squire plaguing her on purpose?

"I was afraid it was Mr. Nethecote," she stammered. "He is always about the fields of an evening."

"Oh, indeed," was the pointed answer; but Dym could not see the smile that accompanied it.

"I wish Miss Nethecote would come back, and that would keep him more at home," observed Dym, who was rather nettled at the squire's tone.

"What, has she not returned? How is that?" he asked, quickly.

"A cousin of theirs has lost her husband lately, and Miss Nethecote is remaining with her and the children."

"Helen Stewart. Ah, an old playmate of Honor's. Is it the loss of his sister's company that has given old Humphrey these roaming habits, I wonder? Talk about the—you know what, Miss Elliott, there he is, I declare. I say, Nethecote!"

"Why, it is never the squire!" came in broad accents through the darkness.

"Why shouldn't it be, man? You didn't think I had turned into a Londoner, did you?"

"Almost," was the dry response, as the two men shook hands; and then Humphrey peered in his short-sighted way through the gloom.

"Miss Elliott is here, Humphrey."

"Ay, ay!" brightening up. "You have stayed over-long at Woodside, surely, Miss Elliott?"

"I am not accountable to you for the time I spend there, am I, Mr. Nethecote?" was the sulky answer, for Dym was cross at having her *tête-à-tête* broken up; she so seldom enjoyed a word with the squire, and now Humphrey had spoiled her pleasure.

But Mr. Nethecote had a staunch friend in the squire. "Come, come, that's the second uncivil speech I have heard from your lips to-night, Miss Elliott. I won't have old Humphrey snubbed in my presence. As my mother is out, I've ordered tea in the library: and if you promise to be amiable, and make it for both of us, I will give you a dozen choice anecdotes of Will Clericus's sayings and doings. There's a bargain. Nethecote, you'll bear us company, will you not?"

"If I shall not be in Miss Elliott's way," was the rueful answer. But Dym, who was already ashamed of her petulance, confirmed the squire's invitation so prettily that Humphrey cheered up again.

That evening was full of perilous sweetness to Dym. Mrs. Chichester, sitting in the vicarage drawing-room and wishing Miss Elliott could be with her, little thought how happily her young companion was employed. The library was Mr. Chichester's private sanctum, and, except for changing the flower-vases in the early morning, Dym had never been invited to cross the threshold. Mrs. Chichester would sit there sometimes of an evening, when they had to discuss particular

business; but Guy was chary of such invitations even to his mother.

It was a small room, but fitted up with the greatest taste and fastidiousness, paneled in dark oak; the carved bookcases were of the same wood, and the hangings to the deep bay-window were of violet velvet.

The lamps were lighted, and a splendid wood fire burned on the hearth, the pine logs diffusing a sweet spicy smell as they burned. Kelpie stretched himself out lazily on the black-bear rug. Dym, sitting behind the silver urn, with her brown dress brightened up with a breast-knot of holly and winter's roses, looked such an image of girlish content and youthfulness that Guy caught himself wondering once or twice whether Humphrey, after all, was good enough for her, and whether there could be any truth in his mother's supposition.

He rather thought there was, as he saw how Humphrey blinked his hazel eyes and watched her every movement after tea. Dym fetched her work, and sat down demurely enough by the centre-table. Mr. Chichester had finished his budget of news from St. Luke's, and was quietly discussing home affairs with Humphrey. Mr. Nethecote's answers were hardly as shrewd as usual; a pretty little rose tint was on Dym's usually pale cheeks, the lace ruffle just suited the dainty white throat. Heaven knows how fair that girlish figure had grown in honest Humphrey's eyes, who just twelve years ago had buried his young betrothed, the sister of that very Helen Stewart whose desolate home Honor was at present brightening.

Few people save the squire knew the history of that early engagement of Humphrey's. Katie Murray was only Dym's age, a young governess of eighteen, when her grave cousin Humphrey fell in love with her. She was a bright sonsie-looking girl, very fair; and yet Humphrey, in spite of Dym's olive complexion and dark hair, always would have it she reminded him of Katie.

Humphrey nearly broke his honest heart when he lost his sweetheart. Kate was not clever, but had transferred a very warm, affectionate heart into her cousin's keeping; she succumbed to a fever she had caught in nursing her little pupils. The pretty head was shorn of its long, fair tresses when Humphrey next saw it, and the rosy lips were dry and black-

ened with fever. "Ah, well, I shall see my girl in heaven," he said, as he turned away.

He spoke very little of his sorrow, even to his sister—these reticent natures suffer silently; some of the bitterest tears Honor ever shed were for her brother. She told Guy Chichester that she felt abashed by Humphrey's goodness and resignation. "He tries to keep bright, that I may not be saddened by his sorrow; but I can see what the effort is to him."

"You both spring from the same parent stem, Honor," he said, smiling; "you and Humphrey live your feelings instead of talking about them." But this was hardly true of either brother or sister—they were slow in attaching themselves. Humphrey especially suffered from that thoroughly English disease, *mauvaise honte;* but both could be passionately demonstrative at times to the object of their affection.

So Humphrey hardly bore himself as a love-sick girl would have done; but he honestly owned his affliction, and mourned long and faithfully for his sweetheart Katie, as he always fondly called her. The years went on, healing the old wound, and just as Humphrey seemed settling into sober old bachelorhood, Dym's bright face and sprightly tongue began to stir the sluggish impulse of the man's heart.

Dym worked on, happily unconscious that she was Humphrey Nethecote's fate. She had plenty of merry smiles and words for him to-night; content is rarely quarrelsome, and Dym was wondrously content.

"The king has come to his own again," she said to herself, with a certain amused consciousness of Guy's lordly looks and ways. He had bidden her a cheery good-night, and had gone out with Humphrey to bring his mother home; when he had taken a few steps in the snow he came back with a strange suppressed eagerness in his manner.

"Good-night, my good little prophet."

"Good-night, Mr. Chichester."

"*Qui patitur vincit.* I shall remember—it is the Chichester's watchword. There, run in out of the snow, my child. Good-night again, God bless you." And, with a smile of singular sweetness, Guy Chichester plunged into the dark shrubberies to rejoin Humphrey.

But neither of them knew Humphrey Nethecote's motto: *Per crucem ad coronam*—Through the cross to the crown.

CHAPTER XV.

BEATRIX ARRIVES AT INGLESIDE.

THE next few weeks passed happily enough.

Dym no longer complained of the dullness of Ingleside; the squire's gun might be heard from morning till evening in the high lands behind the Great House, and the voices of the beaters as they struggled through the covers below. Kelpie accompanied his master. Humphrey lingered in vain beside the trysting-stile. Dym had not ceased her visits to Woodside, but she preferred taking the lower road. Very often a tall figure that she knew was not Mr. Nethecote's came bursting through the dead bracken and vaulted lightly over the five-barred gate. How Dym's foolish little heart would beat as the slouching felt hat and brown beard came in sight! What a king he looked striding through the dim aisles of the wood! Guy had the trick of holding himself grandly: some men, ennobled by nature, carry their heads as though they wore a crown. Guy Chichester was one of these. "Where are you going?—you look like a gray little sister of charity in that cloak," he would call out. Dym had a better companion than Humphrey for her homeward walk then.

The squire had resumed his old sociable habits, and every man, woman, and child about the place basked gladly in his sunny moods again. Mrs. Chichester had recovered her cheerfulness; the evening hours flew by. Dym seldom read now. When the lamps were lighted, Guy would come in and harangue them from a rug for hours, or, at his mother's request, place himself at the grand piano, and, after preluding idly with one hand, burst forth with his glorious voice in chant or song. Dym learned to accompany him, and after her first trial he made her sing with him, or practice the glees and choruses he was preparing for a grand musical entertainment to be given in his cousin's honor.

For, as Dym phrased it in her letter to Will, "the Great House was to be delivered into the hands of the Philistines."

Beatrix was coming to Ingleside.

Poor Dym, her heart sank as the squire talked over arrangements with his mother. Mrs. Delaire had fixed the latter part of January for her promised visit. She and her husband had just returned from Nice, and Beatrix had determined that her first London season as a married woman should be inaugurated by a series of visits, commencing with Ingleside. Mrs. Tressilian and Edith were to join the party. Charlie Tressilian could not get leave of absence, but Guy had asked some friends of his mother's: Colonel and Mrs. Lintot, with their son, just called to the bar, and in ill health from over-study; and a ward of Colonel Lintot's—a Miss Beauchamp, popularly reported to be an heiress.

Ingleside would be occupied from garret to basement. While Mrs. Chichester gave orders about the White Room, the Damask Room, the Red Room, and the Oriel Chamber, or consulted with her housekeeper as to the proper lodgment of Mrs. Delaire's, Mrs. Tressilian's, and Miss Beauchamp's maids, Guy summoned his head keeper and counted probable head of game, and sent invitations out to the neighboring gentry for shooting-parties, breakfasts and luncheons *ad libitum*. There was to be a state dinner party, which would include the grandees of Birstwith and Ripley, and a musical entertainment which should be more general. By degrees this swelled into a dancing-party, then into a ball. Dym wrote out the invitations, and then went with Mrs. Chichester to order a fitting dress for the occasion.

Mrs. Chichester had not forgotten her young dependant's comfort; a small room on the second story was fitted up for her and Edith; Mrs. Chichester had got rid of the obnoxious Mrs. Vivian by promising that Miss Elliott should resume her former charge for the time. Dym looked grateful when she heard of this arrangement. She felt she would be lost among the gay crowd below, she argued a little pitifully when the squire gave his orders that she was to accompany Edith every evening to the drawing-room: "no one will care to see me, and I shall only feel shy and uncomfortable," she pleaded, with a shrinking memory of Beatrix and her cold gray eyes. The near approach of her enemy saddened and oppressed her: "all my goodness will go when I hear her voice," thought the poor child to herself.

But the squire only laughed away her objections; while Mrs. Chichester, under the vague idea that her scruples arose in some degree from her wardrobe, procured her a pretty evening silk in addition to her white muslin. "She will not feel so unlike any one else; and there is the dinner-party and the evening at the vicarage," she said, as though in apology for her extravagance. Dym gave an exclamation of delight when she saw Mrs. Chichester's choice, the very maize that the Harrogate shopman had selected as Dym's color. "You are spoiling me dreadfully," she cried, kissing her hand with a pretty mixture of affection and gratitude. She laid away the shimmering fold of silk with a curious wonder of what Will would think of her in such a dress, and then with renewed courage peeped at the several rooms as she passed.

It was early afternoon, but bright fires already burned in expectation of the various arrivals. Dym lingered longest in the dressing-room attached to the Oriel Chamber, where Edith was to sleep, but she passed the Damask Room with a sort of shudder. "I wonder why some people are a kind of moral east wind to one?" she said to herself, with a little shiver.

Guy Chichester, in his black velvet coat, passed her in the lobby with a nod and smile. "There is the wagonette coming back from the station: the gentlemen are walking up, I hear. Just tell my mother our guests have arrived; she is in her room, I believe."

Dym peeped through the oaken balustrade, much as she had done at Lansdowne House: she could just catch a glimpse of Mrs. Tressilian's velvet and sables, and a hat with a long ostrich plume, that could belong to no other than Beatrix.

"Mother, you must come and welcome the bride," called out the squire, in cheery tones. "What have you done with Frank, Trichy?"

"He is walking up with the others," returned young Mrs. Delaire, composedly: "it was all Colonel Lintot's fault; he would have it that there was no room in the wagonette. Do you know, Guy, Ingleside looks smaller to me than it used in the old days? I could not understand Adelaide's fever of admiration as we drove up."

"Mrs. Delaire has such grand notions," returned a pleasant laughing-voice, evidently Miss Beauchamp's.

"She has come home fresh from Italian palaces," replied

her cousin, good-naturedly. "Well, what did you think of Rome, Trichy?"

"Overrated, as usual. Frank was enthusiastic enough for both—he hired a carriage and cicerone for three days. I never was more tired in my life. I was thankful when we got to Nice. What do you say, child?" freeing her mantle impatiently from Edith's grasp: "where is Miss Elliott? How should I know?" with the haughty turn of the head Dym remembered so well.

They were still standing in the little corridor; the others had passed on into the dining-room. Mr. Chichester stooped and whispered a word into the child's ear, and she flew upstairs so quickly that Miss Elliott had scarcely time to rise from her stooping posture before she found herself clasped in her little pupil's arms.

Edith's ecstacies lasted till tea-time. She was overjoyed at seeing her governess again, and delighted with everything —with her little bed, with the rose-colored curtains, and especially with the tiny snuggery that Mrs. Chichester had fitted up so prettily. Before Dym knew what she was about, she had dragged up her brother-in-law to look at it.

Colonel Delaire was very good-natured. He looked at everything Edith pointed out, and admired the view extremely. He was evidently surprised to recognize an old acquaintance in Miss Elliott, though he was far too well bred to show it. At the child's request, he partook of a cup of tea; though he put it down rather hastily when he heard Beatrix's voice in the corridor below.

"I asked Trichy to come up, but she said she was too tired. She has been round to the stables, though, with Cousin Guy," blurted out Edith, in her usual thoughtless fashion.

Dym was sorry for the child's frankness when she saw Colonel Delaire bite his lip with an annoyed air. Edith crept on to her governess's lap when he had gone, and shook her fair hair affectionately over her shoulder.

"Trichy was so cross when I asked her, and that made Frank come up instead. Don't you like Frank? he is always telling Trichy that she ought to be kinder to me. They had a quarrel once when Trichy behaved badly to mamma."

Dym tried to hush the child's confidence, but she could not help thinking over her words. There was a careworn look on

Colonel Delaire's handsome face as though matrimony had not perfectly agreed with him, and a restless, anxious expression in his blue eyes, when they rested on his beautiful wife, that told volumes.

Dym was in nervous trepidation at the thought of the evening; she deferred her entrance into the drawing-room so long that the ladies had already left the dining-room and were gathered round the fire. Dym was stealing away into a corner by herself, but Mrs. Chichester took her hand kindly and drew her into the circle. Mrs. Lintot and Miss Beauchamp both addressed her pleasantly; but Beatrix, who was standing somewhat apart from the others, only raised her eyes for a second and bowed coldly.

In spite of her dislike, Dym could not refuse a tribute to her loveliness. Mrs. Delaire looked even more beautiful than Beatrix Tressilian had done. She was a little paler, and to a close observer there was still the same dissatisfied expression and a quick lowering of the white brows when anything displeased her; but her beauty was magnificent; and, though it needed nothing to set it off, she wore her white dress without jewel or ornament of any kind save the rich lace that adorned it.

She drew aside with a scornful air when Mrs. Tressilian beckoned Dym to a seat beside her. Dym, who was strangely ill at ease in her presence, was glad when the gentlemen came in, and she was at liberty to move to a distant table, where she turned over engravings with Edith or watched the various groups.

Colonel Lintot had a red face and a white moustache, and was a far more soldierly-looking man than Colonel Delaire. His wife was a brisk, cheerful little woman, prematurely faded by Indian suns, and looking far older than her husband. Their son was very unlike either: he was a tall, gentlemanly man, but an habitual stoop and a habit of wearing an eyeglass spoiled him.

Miss Beauchamp, who accompanied them, was very young, and not at all good-looking; but her sweet retiring manners charmed Dym from the first. In spite of her wealth and the grand estate in Wales that the Lintots were always talking about, she was very unaffected and natural, dressed simply, and seemed to study others' wishes before her own.

In Beatrix's presence she drooped a little. A sort of sub-

dued sadness that will sometimes come over a plain woman in the presence of striking beauty was discernible in her manner. Dym ceased to wonder over it: her shrewd eyes soon guessed the young lady's secret. Adelaide Beauchamp's mild blue eyes grew pathetic and then suffused with tears as evening after evening George Lintot lingered by Beatrix's side, as though fascinated in spite of himself.

If Beatrix guessed her pain, she never spared her. She ruled over her cousin's drawing-room most despotically, to his infinite amusement. It was not his way to pay court to any woman; but he was very indulgent to her caprices, and treated her with frank kindness—contriving little plans for her diversions, and installing himself as her cavalier on all occasions of ceremony.

Poor Dym that first evening would have been very dull but for Miss Beauchamp's kindness. Night after night she crept away to her distant corner, in spite of Mrs. Chichester's solicitations, fearing lest her presence should provoke a fresh sneer from Beatrix.

Beatrix was not actively unkind. She left Miss Elliott alone for the most part, but there was a suppressed scorn in her manner when she addressed her that roused all the old bad feelings. While the other ladies took Mrs. Chichester's cue, and treated her with marked kindness, Beatrix would give her trifling commissions, not always civilly, in a way that brought her dependent position more prominently into notice.

"Had you not better ring for Randall?" Mr. Chichester said once, in a tone of reproof, when Beatrix had hunted Dym out from a distant corner to fetch her some article she had mislaid. Dym, who never dared to rebel in his presence, brought it with heightened color and laid it down.

Beatrix said not a word of thanks; and, as though to punish her for her incivility, her cousin left her side abruptly and went to the other end of the room. There was certainly a little malice in Beatrix's treatment of Dym. She had always thoroughly disliked her; but Guy's chivalrous defense had deepened this into an active enmity. Beatrix had never forgiven her cousin for taking Miss Elliott to Ingleside; she had not forgotten his warm speeches on her behalf, and the anger with which he had rebuked her. He had parted from her with bitter words on both sides, and Beatrix was not likely to

forgive the innocent cause of it all. Dym's presence at Ingleside was an affront to her—nay, more, a constant reproach; and her haughty nature could not brook it quietly. Dym's pride often writhed under a covert sarcasm or a cutting speech that she alone understood. The squire was not always there to defend her. In his absence Beatrix often contrived to make herself very disagreeable. Neither Guy nor his mother guessed the misery those days were to Dym. True to her motto, Dym scorned to complain, but she endured as badly as possible.

Men cannot understand this petty spite of women, for, with shame be it said, it is purely and entirely feminine. If Mr. Chichester had witnessed it all, he would have understood it as little as later on he did Dym himself.

Whether purposely or not, he certainly took very little notice of his *protégée* at this time. Dym often went to bed weary and dispirited, to cry over her lost happiness, as she called it. "You are so *triste*, as Mrs. Vivian calls it," Edith said to her, one day. Edith scarcely recognized her light-hearted governess sometimes.

Ah, this sadness! it is a traitor in the citadel of the heart; it sits brooding over fancied ruins, while the enemy is taking the outworks. "Above all, beware of sadness," says an old father of the faith; and indeed despondency helps no one.

Dym's outworks were unguarded. While she indulged in discontent or envious thought, she grew less watchful, and, alas, less prayerful, over her words and acts; sometimes her abruptness startled Mrs. Chichester, and called forth a few chiding words. Dym was in no mood for reproof. Instead of waxing gentle, she relapsed into moodiness. The charge of her little pupil became a weariness instead of a pleasure; it hindered her visits to Woodside, which would have done her good. Sometimes when she and Edith took their walk, they would hear the voices of the shooting-party; when the weather was mild, the ladies would carry out their luncheon; Dym caught a glimpse of them once. Guy was sitting under a hedge, laughing and talking with Frank Delaire, and Beatrix was leaning against the fence, holding her cousin's gun. She had her green dress looped up picturesquely, and one of the sportsmen's bags slung across her shoulder. "You would do for Maid Marion, Trichy," Dym heard Mr. Chichester say.

She turned away with an envious sigh as they plodded on through the rutty lane.

It was the evening of the ball; five-o'clock tea was over, and most of the party had dispersed to prepare themselves for the evening; all but Dym, who always presided at this meal, and was waiting for Mr. Chichester and Mrs. Delaire, who was trying to finish a novel by the firelight.

"You will be late for dinner, Beatrix," remonstrated her husband, as he left the room; but Beatrix only shook her fair head pettishly, and read on.

Dym sat listlessly watching the shadows and the play of the firelight on the walls, till the squire came in, bringing a rush of cold air with him.

"What, Trichy, not dressing? I warned every one to be in time; to-night dinner waits for no man."

Beatrix shut up her book with a light laugh.

"Very well, most potent cousin;" and, as Guy brought his teacup to the rug with a sociable air, "Well, what have you been doing with yourself this afternoon?"

"Ask Mahomet."

"What, have you been riding?"

"Cela va sans dire."

"Oh, Guy, and never to ask me to join you!"

"I thought Frank wanted you."

Beatrix made a gesture of impatience. "Frank is always wanting me. I never thought one's husband would bore one so. Frank never seems able to write a letter now without my dictation."

"He shows he knows how to value a clever wife."

"Guy, when you pay compliments I always know you are in a good humor."

"So I am. Trichy, I have got a surprise for you. Guess who is coming this evening."

Beatrix's eyes questioned her cousin's face closely before she answered. Guy's eyes were bright and dark; his whole mien was joyous.

"As though I need to guess," returned Beatrix, a little contemptuously; her manner had changed.

"Oh, wise young judge—a second Daniel come to judgment! So you knew it was Miss Nethecote?"

"Of course," spoken calmly, but with a slight frown, and

as though the subject did not interest her. She reopened her book.

Mr. Chichester looked a little disappointed at the reception of his news, and, after lingering for a minute or two, left the room rather hurriedly.

When he was gone, Beatrix laid down her book again, and, leaning her chin on her hand, sat for a little while lost in thought. Dym, who was tired of her position, ventured to remind her that the second bell would soon ring.

"I am afraid you will be very late, Mrs. Delaire."

"What if I be?" was the haughty answer; but she rose notwithstanding, and then, as though a sudden thought struck her,—

"Miss Elliott, do you know when Miss Nethecote returned?"

"I was not aware till this moment that she had returned," answered Dym, with perfect truth.

"Oh, perhaps you are not acquainted with her."

"On the contrary, we are very good friends," returned Dym, rather abruptly; "but I have not seen her brother for some days."

"What, you know him too? A pretty fair specimen of a rustic farmer, is he not? I suppose," turning her long neck aside and speaking carelessly, "that she is still as handsome as ever?"

"Handsome is not the word," was the brief answer.

"Indeed!" looking at her now in surprise; "and what would you call her, Miss Elliott?"

"I should call her beautiful. I have never seen a face like Miss Nethecote's—never," returned Dym, with sudden effusion.

"You have such a large experience, have you not?" spoken with Beatrix's old disdain; but she was evidently vexed and startled by Dym's earnestness.

Dym was not likely to abate her enthusiasm on that score.

"And she is as good as she is beautiful; I know Mr. Chichester thinks so."

Dym never knew why she made this rash speech; she said it thoughtlessly, and without attaching much importance to her words.

"What do you know about Mr. Chichester's likes and dis-

likes?" returned Beatrix, in an irritated manner. "Do you think such observations are fitting in your position? Take care what you are about, Miss Elliott. My cousin will not brook a word on this subject."

"I—what have I said?" stammered Dym. "Every one praises Miss Nethecote; it cannot be any harm to say she is good." Then, as though rebelling against Beatrix's harsh manner, "And she is goodness itself."

A sudden passion whitened Beatrix's fair face—a sort of spasm crossed it.

"Good!" with a little laugh, as she turned to leave the room. "Ay, if it be good to be the curse of Guy Chichester's life, as that woman has been his curse, and will be till he dies."

CHAPTER XVI.

HALF-TRUTHS MAKE MISCHIEF.

"As that woman has been his curse, and will be till he dies."

At Beatrix's terrible words Dym had shrunk back appalled. Honor, Guy Chichester's curse? Impossible! his good angel, rather. Mrs. Delaire's angry speech discomposed Dym sadly: she was getting loosed from her moorings; everything was wrong; there was mystery and discomfort round her, an undercurrent of trouble and bitterness that colored everything.

Mrs. Delaire's manner was insupportable. "I will not bear it—why should I?" said Dym's old enemy.

Dym went up to dress for the evening, miserable and out of tune with everything. She had been looking forward to the party, but now she could enjoy nothing. She put on her beautiful dress listlessly, and went down-stairs. In the corridor she came suddenly on Beatrix and Adelaide Beauchamp.

"Do let me help you," she heard Miss Beauchamp say, persuasively; "the maids are so busy, and there is nearly half a yard of that beautiful lace torn."

"It was Kelpie's fault. Why should you trouble yourself, Adelaide? There is Miss Elliott; she will be glad to make herself useful. Run back to Aunt Constance; she wants you. Miss Elliott, just fetch a needle and thread, please. I have torn my Honiton flounce." Beatrix spoke in some natural haste, her manner was not otherwise aggressive; but Dym chose to take umbrage at the old peremptory tone.

"Stewart, will you tell Mrs. Delaire's maid that her mistress wants her?" she returned, quietly, passing on; but her self-possession was a little disturbed when she came suddenly on Mr. Chichester; he was standing in the doorway, and must have heard all.

"You are not very courteous to my guests, Miss Elliott," he said, with a slightly displeased air; and he went to his cousin's side and questioned her anxiously as to the amount of damage. Dym's cheeks were burning at this well-merited rebuke when she went into the dancing-room. The band was tuning up, and the guests beginning to arrive. Guy opened the ball with his cousin, and then dancing began in earnest. Dym had no lack of partners. Humphrey came up and claimed her at once, and others followed; but she danced without spirit, and answered her partners mechanically. She could not rally and enjoy herself; she had done wrong, and drawn down the squire's reproof on her for the first time, and all her sunshine had vanished. In the middle of a dance she caught sight of Honor. Miss Nethecôte had entered very quietly, but Mr. Chichester made his way to her at once.

Dym felt a thrill of happiness when she saw the calm, beautiful face, but Honor did not see her, and the feeling vanished again.

She was tired, and sat watching the dancers; she was generally light of foot and unflagging in her energy, but now she had lost all zest for the exercise. "What makes me so cross? Why do I feel so suddenly sick of it all?" she said to herself, and she quite started when Beatrix's cold voice again addressed her: "Not dancing, Miss Elliott?"

"I am tired," answered Dym, curtly enough.

"So am I," was the astonishingly amiable answer, considering how Dym had treated her. "Can you make room for me on that seat?"

Dym moved rather ungraciously: some instinct warned her

that any further conversation with Mrs. Delaire would endanger her equanimity. Beatrix did not long keep silence.

"Have you spoken to your favorite yet?—Miss Nethecote, I mean," as Dym only arched her eyebrows and looked mystified.

"No; I don't think she has seen me."

"Indeed! the room is not so very crowded." Then, shaking her dress out carelessly, "I gave my cousin a hint not to dance with her too often, as even you had noticed his preference."

"Mrs. Delaire!"

"Well!"

"You never repeated my silly speech to Mr. Chichester?"

"Was it silly?" pulling a little bit of stephanotis out of her bouquet. "I thought you were in earnest. I only told him that you considered Miss Nethecote a sort of earthly angel, and that you believed he thought the same."

"Oh, how could you—how could you?" returned Dym, in a suffocated voice. "What will he think of me?"

"He did not seem to like it, certainly. He looked black enough for a minute or two, and then he said he must send you to Miss Nethecote's to learn manners, as they had not improved lately."

A flash from Dym's dark eyes answered her.

"Mrs. Delaire!"—speaking passionately—"ah, it is like you to bring me into this trouble. What, have you not done me mischief enough, without following me here and spoiling everything?"

"You may blame your temper, not me," returned Mrs. Delaire, composedly. She swept away in her lace and jewels, leaving Dym in a tumult of indignation. What were her troubles at Lansdowne House, compared with this? She had maligned her to her best friend, and poisoned his mind against her. Dym had a shrewd notion how Guy Chichester's pride would be wounded by such a statement, exaggerated as it probably was.

Mrs. Delaire was not intentionally false in her representation of the squire's wrath. For a moment he had been angry—nay, excessively angry—and then he had smiled, and said, "Nonsense, Beatrix! you must have misunderstood her; I don't believe Miss Elliott would have the bad taste to say such

a thing;" and, as his cousin eagerly asserted the truth of Dym's unfortunate speech, adding, "You have no idea how rude Miss Elliott can be, Guy," he had answered with a sigh, "I am afraid I have just seen a specimen, Trichy. Poor child! we must send her to Honor to learn what real gentleness and politeness means," in a tone that would have made Dym heartily ashamed of her bad humor if she had heard it.

But, unfortunately, Dym believed Mrs. Delaire's version, and her heart grew hard even against the squire himself. "That he should say such a thing to her, when he knows how she hates me!" she thought, with a mixture of hurt feelings and pain; and then a hand was laid upon hers. Honor was standing beside her, leaning on Mr. Chichester's arm.

"Miss Elliott, sitting alone in a brown study," said the squire, gravely. He was evidently trying to speak as usual, but to Dym's eyes his face looked very stern. Miss Nethecote took the girl's hand and looked at her anxiously.

"What have you all been doing with her?—she looks sick and sad, like a little robin I took in once, half starved with cold. She wants warming, Mr. Chichester; you must give her to me."

"With all my heart," he answered, more gayly. "Have you a recipe for the vapors, Honor? Miss Elliott looks as though she had been suffering from them. Is there anything amiss?" he continued, stooping down and eying her curiously.

"No," returned Dym, sulkily. Mr. Chichester had forgotten his passing displeasure, but Dym thought he was laughing at her, and her color rose dangerously.

"I do not think your gay crowd agrees with her," continued Honor's grave, kind voice. "I know just how she feels; lonely, and out of harmony with it all. You will come home with me and rest for a few days, will you not, Dym?"

"I would rather stay here," replied Dym, inaudibly, and feeling as if the tears would come in another moment. She was just in that state of soreness when sympathy aggravates instead of soothes, and in her present mood Nidderdale Cottage offered no attraction. One must feel good to be happy near Honor.

Mr. Chichester gave one of his old keen looks.

"Miss Elliott, you are not yourself this evening; some one has offended you. Come, what is it?"

But Dym would not answer; he was touching the sore place too roughly.

"She will go with you, Honor," he continued, decisively, and the squire's tone was very much what it would have been to a naughty child. "I think you are right, and Ingleside does not agree with her just now." Mr. Chichester had his own reasons for so quickly accepting Honor's offer; perhaps he noticed more than Mrs. Delaire would quite have approved, but his cool peremptoriness only stirred up Dym's opposition.

"I cannot go—I do not wish to go," she answered, with a little anger. Beatrix's words returned to her with full force: he said he must send her to Miss Nethecote's to learn manners. But if she declined to be so sent?

"Do my wishes go for nothing then? I have very good reasons for wishing you to accept Miss Nethecote's kind invitation. What, Miss Elliott, you still hesitate?" in a tone of astonishment.

"Hush! do not press her; I will speak to her presently," whispered Honor, who saw that there was something more than met the ear in Dym's objection; but the squire persisted.

"I expect to be answered, Honor. Miss Elliott must tell me truthfully what are her objections to complying with the favor I have just asked her. You heard me say just now that I wished this particularly, did you not?"

"Yes," was the sullen answer. Another time the blackness of his brow would have been dreadful to Dym, but now it only added fresh cause for aggravation.

"And you decline?"

"I do," returned Dym, stung by his manner into exasperation. "I was engaged to be Mrs. Chichester's companion, not Miss Nethecote's."

"Oh, my child!" Honor said no more, as she moved away with a grieved face; but it was well Dym did not see the look on Mr. Chichester's as he followed her without a word.

"What is it all about?—why are you angering the squire?" exclaimed Humphrey. He had come up for another dance, and had heard the last few sentences.

Et tu, Brute!

"Oh, don't talk to me! Why are you all against me? I wish I had never come here!" cried poor angry Dym. She went out of the room in a little whirl of fury and despair,

scattering rose-leaves as she went. Poor passionate Cinderella! The moonlight was shining on the terraces and garden-paths as she fled past the windows of the corridor; the evil fairy had come to the feast, and was poisoning her pleasure. When Dym was a child, she used to huddle herself into a small heap on the floor and scream out her passion. How she longed to do it now! She fetched a shawl and curled herself up in a dark corner in the snuggery, sobbing and crying, much as though she were a child again. He had made her contemptible in Honor's eyes; she had insulted her goodness and spoken rudely to her. Mr. Chichester should be her friend no longer: she hated him; he was as cold and cruel as Beatrix herself; she had better go away, for she would be happy here no longer. One knows how the changes ring on in the gamut of passion: a little anger, a brief spasm of envy or jealousy, will blot out a whole fair prospect. Dym hardly credited how much jealousy was at the bottom of this crazy mood of hers; she thought she hated her benefactor when she was simply ill-using him and herself too; she was testing the fidelity of that magnificent truth, "And to be wroth with one that we love does work like madness in the brain."

Dym's madness was short-lived, but it was none the less to be rued. She had sowed too many thorns in her pillow to sleep well that night. She had no idea that Honor had been sitting on the edge of her little bed, patiently for an hour waiting for her; when she did not come, she stole out of the room and went back to Guy; you may be sure she lingered long after the other dancers had left, with a brief prayer that Dym's willfulness might be forgiven; but for once the squire was inexorable.

"Of course she must apologize to you," was his sole answer. "Until then I can look over nothing."

Dym hardly knew what was in store for her when she received her summons to the library the next morning. She was rather heavy-eyed and subdued—a little hard and rebellious, perhaps, but still to be conquered by a few kind words. Will could have brought her round to tears of penitence in a moment; but Will's way was not Mr. Chichester's.

He was deeply hurt and offended, and Miss Elliott must know it.

Dym's face grew sullen again when she saw the rigid lines of the mouth, and heard the cold displeased tone.

"You have sent for me, sir," using the forbidden word. It certainly did not help to clear Mr. Chichester's brow, as he placed a chair for her, and took up his old position against the mantelpiece.

"Yes, I have sent for you. Though you are my mother's companion, Miss Elliott, I must remind you again that I am master in this house, and that I do not choose my friends to be insulted."

Dym's mouth closed rebelliously.

"I will waive your behavior to my cousin," he went on. "Perhaps there may be faults on both sides; but let me tell you that nothing—nothing," speaking still more decisively, "can justify your constant rudeness to her. Last night I could not help wondering what your brother would have said to you."

"I will not have you speak to me of Will," returned Dym, her cheeks flaming again.

Mr. Chichester bowed his head, but his tone increased in severity.

"You compel me to tell you that you are wronging him and your better nature too, when you behave so. Your conduct last night to Miss Nethecote was foolish and ungrateful in the extreme. I would use a harsher word, but your conscience will apply it. I confess I am greatly disappointed in you, Miss Elliott."

It was hard; but she deserved it.

"Let me go," exclaimed Dym, in an agitated voice; "I cannot bear this."

"Pardon me, but you must bear to be told of your faults," he returned, coldly.

"No, no," she repeated, still more wildly. "I disappoint every one. I am not meant to be good; I have a temper, and every one provokes it. You are all so harsh and stern, Mr. Chichester; let me go home. I cannot stay here any longer."

"That is sheer nonsense, Miss Elliott."

"I tell you I will go," still more sullenly.

"This is worse than foolish," he replied, severely. "It is childish and undignified; neither my mother nor I will receive your resignation in this spirit. We will not allow you to quit us for such a cause."

"How can you help it, Mr. Chichester?"

Dym was almost beside herself. A ghost of a smile flitted across Mr. Chichester's stern face at her childishness, and then he braced himself up to fresh severity.

"You are wasting my time and your own; I cannot keep my guests waiting. I have sent for you this morning to give you an opportunity of making some apology; but I see I am mistaken."

"May I go, then, sir?" Certainly Dym knew how to be provoking.

"You may go when I have finished what I have to say," he returned, in his haughtiest manner. "I am sorry you oblige me to speak so peremptorily. Your apology to me is of small moment; but I request—nay, I insist—that you make one without delay to Miss Nethecote."

Dym rose without a word.

"Do you understand me, Miss Elliott?"

"I understand you well, Mr. Chichester," turning very pale, and speaking as proudly as he.

"And you mean to comply with my wish?"

"If not—you have my resignation," spoken with a little scorn.

"What folly! what madness!" he muttered, walking to the window; "the girl must be crazy. Miss Elliott," turning to her with a heavy frown on his face, "I think we have talked long enough. When I hear you have made amends to Miss Nethecote, we will think about your leaving us."

CHAPTER XVII.

UNDER THE STARS.

COBWEBS again! A few poor pitiful meshes.

Half-truths magnified; a little leak widening into a dangerous breach; a few hasty words uttered at random, to be wiped out by bitter tears.

After all, how often are we like the Midianites!—a few broken pitchers, a slight confusion of lights, a sudden terror

in the host, and we turn our hands against each other. We war with our best friends; we fall upon swords stretched out in our defense.

There is a wonderful axiom in philosophy—God help us if it be true!—that sound never dies; that a word once spoken goes echoing on through space forever. Think of that vast inconceivable torrent of sound rolling up among the stars; think of the horrible blasphemies of earth, the foul words, the foolish utterances, that add volume to that dread accusation: an eternity of sound, never to be silenced till time shall be no more!

When the books are opened—what if for the space of half an hour there shall again be silence in heaven?—and that pitiful wave of sound reverberate to the everlasting doors, shall we not be judged beforehand who speak so leniently of the sins of the tongue, who laugh lightly over words that will make the angels veil their faces?

"Let your words be few," says the wise man.

"Speak much and often," is the counsel of fools.

"Little by little, by degrees," is the devil's motto. The father of lies is a wary diplomatist. If we fell too quickly, we should rise too humbly; no one slips the whole way downhill. We first lay plenty of those paving-stones which we are told line the nether world; we are full of good intentions; we are a little too long in groping our way upward, perhaps; there is dust that blinds us; stumbling-blocks, rough stones, that trip us up. Sometimes we fall prone; at other times we gather fresh strength and rise; now and then we cast our staff away. Ah, well for us that in the wilderness God's providence and our good angel do not desert us, for there are many whose beginnings of evil were small, whose end is a lost eternity.

"Let not the sun go down on your wrath." I wonder how many of us appreciate the wisdom, the intense common sense, to speak with all reverence, of those words. "To strike when the iron is hot," is homely parlance, but it conveys the same truth.

We should never sleep on our anger. It is as though we called an evil spirit to our couch and bade it watch beside us.

There is no hatred so intense as the hatred begotten of love.

There is no wrath so cruel as that we cherish against a beloved object.

As religious wars have been the bloodiest ever known in this world's history, so is our antagonism the strongest when a friend has provoked it. The cruelest passion of which human nature is capable is jealousy; and jealousy is begotten of love.

Dym had entered Guy Chichester's presence subdued and saddened, conscious of her fault, but not willing to own it; but she left it feeling as cold and hard as a stone. She was waiting for her olive-branch to come to her, without sending out the messenger for it. Ah, when our flood-tides are ebbing, how few of us ever stretch out our hands and pull "the dove into the ark"!

If it comes to us, well and good; but Pride—the foremost of the rank and file of the "Devil's Own"—forbids us to make the first advances. In her present mood, which was Esau-like, Dym would have died rather than ask Honor's pardon.

"Let him turn me away, as he wanted to turn Stewart," she said to herself, with a bitter laugh.

As she sat among the guests that evening, people wondered what had come to Miss Elliott. In lieu of her former dreamy silence and timid shrinking, she talked, and talked well; her dark eyes shone with strange fitful light; a sort of fever burned in her veins, and gave color to her olive skin; the pale, pretty-looking girl had warmed almost into beauty. Mr. Lintot for the first time entered into conversation with her. Humphrey, who was present, stood beside them perfectly silent: he could not understand this new phase. Dym talked feverishly; but there was method in her madness. She grew argumentative, sparkling, witty; some of her racy sayings provoked peals of laughter, and reached Guy himself. As though the dark, moody figure added zest to her mirth, she redoubled her efforts.

An hour afterwards, Mrs. Chichester found the girl sitting wan and exhausted on her little bed, with all the light gone out out of her face; but she made an effort of gayety when she saw her friend.

"Ah, you are coming to scold me. Did you think I wanted a cap and bells to-night, Mrs. Chichester?" with a miserable little laugh.

"My dear, that will do. We have had enough of this folly."

"If you knew how tired I was of being sensible, and Mr. Lintot was so amusing," pleaded Dym.

"Do you think I have come at this time of night to talk to you about Mr. Lintot?"

"No; oh, no;" then, hypocritically, "but I must confess I was rather too bad this evening."

Mrs. Chichester sighed at the flippant tone; and then she took Dym's hot hand and stroked it gently.

"My dear, you are tired and feverish. Perhaps we had better talk to-morrow."

"As you please;" then, affecting to yawn, "You must be very tired too, Mrs. Chichester."

"I think I should sleep better if you would let me speak to you now," went on her friend, gently. "My dear, what I have heard to-day has distressed me greatly."

A restless tapping of Dym's foot against the floor; the tired face was beginning to grow sullen again. She was still in her white dress; but her braids of hair had been loosened, and fell over her shoulders in dark, shining masses. As she sat there curled up on the foot of the bed, she looked such a child that Mrs. Chichester could almost have taken her in her arms and kissed the willfulness away; but no child's naughtiness shone in Dym's heavy eyes.

"My dear, I thought you loved me."

"Do I not, Mrs. Chichester?" But the tone was cold.

"If you loved me, would you think of leaving me, when you know," her voice sinking in spite of herself, "how helpless I am likely to become?"

Dym pushed back the hair from her temples with a movement of irritation. "You need not have reminded me of that, when you know I must go."

"Has Guy told you so?"

Dym was silent, and then her honesty was too much for her.

"No, Mrs. Chichester; I am sending myself away. It is no use trying to be good, and so I have given it up."

"But why must you go, my child?"

"Because I cannot stop here. Oh, why do you question me so? I cannot be good, like you and Miss Nethecote, and so I had better go. I never meant to leave you, Mrs. Chichester," her bosom heaving in spite of herself. "You

have always been so kind to me, and I love you so; but there are many that will serve you better, and not trouble you as I should do if I stayed."

"I will risk it," was the gentle answer. "My child, I cannot have you leave me in this way."

"I have brought it on myself," in a low voice: "his conditions are too hard. I will not ask Miss Nethecote's pardon."

"My dear Miss Elliott, not if you be in the wrong?"

"Not when he bids me do it in that manner. I have been wronged, too, cruelly wronged. I will not stay here to be treated and laughed at as though I were a child!"

"Hush, hush!"

"No, no, I will not hush. Do you know how hard he has been to me? I was wrong; but I have not deserved such angry looks and words. He looked as though he would almost have crushed me. I felt then as though I hated him."

"You hated Guy?"

"It was too bad to hate my benefactor, was it not? Of course it was all my temper. Oh, Mrs. Chichester, you are disappointed in me too."

"Poor child, you sorely grieve me."

"I grieve every one," returned Dym, sadly. "When I go home to Will, he will be ready to give me up too. Do you know what I was thinking about when you came up-stairs, Mrs. Chichester?"

Mrs. Chichester shook her head.

"I was thinking of a fairy-story Mr. Chichester once told Edith, about a fair, beautiful woman, who had a millstone given her instead of a heart, and who was beloved by a great prince."

"My dear, the darkness is making you fanciful."

"She was the delight of his eyes because she was so beautiful; but her stoniness and want of love chilled him in time. It is a long story; but I know she found her own heart again too late."

"That is true of many women, I fear."

"The end is too dreadful. She went mad, for he loved some one else; and she went through the streets crying, 'Oh, my heart, my heart!' and some good fairy in pity gave her back the millstone again and changed her into a statue."

"Very pretty; but we are wandering from the subject, my child."

"No," replied Dym, pressing her two hands on her heart; "sometimes I think it is true of me. I love people so, and then I get angry, and feel as though I were changed into stone. If I could feel sorry, I would; but nothing you say seems to touch me."

Mrs. Chichester rose sadly. "Then we will talk of this again. My son was right when he said I had better not come to you to-night."

"Did he say that, Mrs. Chichester? If I am so wicked, why do you kiss me?"

"I suppose because I love you," was the quiet answer; and, touched to the heart, in spite of herself, Dym threw her arms round her friend's neck.

After that night Dym relapsed into her subdued silent state again; now and then her better feelings were touched, and she almost brought herself to the point of seeking Honor; but a sarcasm from Beatrix, or more marked coldness on the squire's part, silenced the good intentions and hardened her in her obstinacy. Beatrix did not openly torment her, but she made no secret of her triumph at the state of things. To her sharp eye the squire's displeasure was evident enough. Mr. Chichester treated his *protégée* with courtesy in his guests' presence, but he never voluntarily addressed her; and the chill politeness of his answers prevented Dym from taking the initiative. Mrs. Chichester too, probably at her son's suggestion, took very little notice of her, unless they were alone, and then she would resume her gentle persuasions.

How Dym endured her miserable position and maintained her sulleness was evidennce of the mingled strength and pride of her nature. Once, when she was very wretched, Humphrey came up to her, and in a low voice begged her to come and see Honor.

"She will be right glad to see you, and it is so long since you have been at Nidderdale Cottage," he said, persuasively; but Humphrey's homely eloquence was not to prevail.

"I have not been in the mood to take lessons in politeness," returned Dym, in a sarcastic tone. Humphrey merely stared, but Mr. Chichester, who was passing at that moment, heard it.

The next morning a note, in the squire's handwriting, was laid on Miss Elliott's table.

"I do not think a second conversation will be productive of any good," it began, "and so I am writing to you, and I must beg the favor of your replying in the same way.

"If I were disappointed in you a week ago, Miss Elliott, you may guess what my feelings are now. I know what temper is—God forgive me; but a mind that will not own itself in the wrong, that will persist in that wrong day after day, must be a small one indeed.

"I begin to see you are right in thinking we must part; under the present state of things Ingleside must be a most undesirable residence for you. My mother and I are willing to accept your resignation, if after these ten days' cool consideration you still persist in it. I am grieved my mother's kindness should be so wounded, and I feel very deeply for your brother..

"Perhaps you will remember him, and choose another course before it is too late.

"If so, my sole condition is that before four-and-twenty hours are over you make peace with Miss Nethecote, and perhaps in that case I may still be able to subscribe myself

"Your true friend,

"GUY LATIMER CHICHESTER."

When Dym had read to the end of the note, she gave a great sob of pain, and tore it into little pieces; and a moment afterwards placed herself at her writing-table, and wrote a brief answer, again tendering her resignation.

Poor Dym! she thought it was cool; but there was despair in every line. "Since you have ceased to trust me, and are so bitterly disappointed in me, I had better go," she wrote; "I have not been worthy of your estimation, and I deserve to lose it. I will write to my brother, and beg him to find me a situation nearer home. I must leave you to fix the time for me to quit you, but I can wait (if you wish it) till Mrs. Chichester has suited herself with another companion. For my own comfort, I cannot leave Ingleside too soon."

A great splash of tear-blots blotted the last words, and she was obliged to re-write them. As she did so, a curious resolution came into her mind.

She was contemptible in Mr. Chichester's eyes, because, in her false pride, she had refused to atone for her fault. Well,

she would atone for it, before twenty-four hours were over; she would humble herself before Honor; but she would go all the same.

"How can I live on here and know he despises me?" she said, choking down another bitter sob. That was the secret of her despair: she had lost caste in Guy Chichester's fastidious eyes, she had wounded his notions of honor; he no longer thought the same of her.

The bad humor was oozing rapidly away when Dym could write that she was not worthy of Guy Chichester's goodness. When she had finished her letter, she dried her eyes, and, hastily removing all marks of agitation, carried it herself to the library.

She thought herself safe from observation, as no one invaded the squire's sanctum in his absence. She was greatly startled, then, when her low tap was answered by a faint "Come in."

It was too late to retreat, so Dym pushed open the door with a hand that would tremble in spite of her assumed boldness, and found herself where she least wished to be—in the squire's presence.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Chichester; I thought you were out shooting, or I would not have disturbed you;" and then she stood irresolute.

Mr. Chichester was sitting, or rather lying, back in his velvet lounging-chair, with his hands over his head, pressing his temples tightly.

"Do you want me?" he said, not rising as usual.

Dym had seen that drawn white look on his face before. In a moment she had forgotten the estrangement, her letter, and everything as she sprang to his side.

"You have one of your headaches, Mr. Chichester," she said, in a sweet unsteady voice he had heard once before. "Can I do nothing to relieve you?"

"No, thank you," he replied, looking up at her with heavy lack-lustre eyes, and an expression of suffering passed over his face: "this is not going to be one of my bad headaches. I have been fighting it off these three hours, and the worst is over."

"But you are still in pain; do let me try the cold fomentation again," persisted Dym. But he turned his face away restlessly.

"No, thank you, Miss Elliott."

"At least let me steep this handkerchief in eau-de-Cologne; you are so hot, it will refresh you."

But he shook his head, and a moment afterwards closed his eyes, as though her pertinacity annoyed him.

Poor Dym! for a moment she stood looking at him as though her heart would burst. He had said he would always think of his nurse gratefully, and now he would accept nothing at her hand, though she knew with womanly instinct how that burning head and forehead craved the cool laving and fragrant waters. He had said he should always think of her when he had a headache, and now he would not suffer her to touch him. Dym turned away with an odd choking in her throat, but she could not leave him like this. The winter's sun was shining into the room; she softly lowered the blind, and interposed a screen between him and the fire, taking care to replenish it noiselessly. Then she fetched Mrs. Chichester's vinaigrette and eau-de-Cologne, and laid them beside him.

"Thank you, that will do," he said with a slight frown Dym knew so well; evidently her persistence displeased him. "You have brought a letter for me, have you not?"

"It will do to-morrow," she replied, hurriedly; but he held out his hand, and she was obliged to give it. She had no excuse for lingering now, but before she reached the door he recalled her.

"Miss Elliott, is this your final answer?"

Dym bowed; words at that moment were impossible. Oh, if she had never written that letter! But it was too late now. She must abide by her decision.

"Very well," he returned, closing his eyes again; and Dym felt herself dismissed.

Every one noticed how ill Miss Elliott looked at luncheon that day. She had some work to do for Mrs. Chichester that afternoon, and it was nearly dusk when she had finished it. When she had laid it aside, she penciled a few words on a slip of paper and gave it to Edith, begging her to deliver it to Mrs. Chichester when she returned from her drive.

"Dear Mrs. Chichester, I have gone down to Nidderdale Cottage. Please excuse me from the drawing-room this evening," was all it said, only Edith, by some mistake, gave it into the squire's hand instead.

Dym put on her little gray cloak, and went out into the cold wintry air. Kelpie wanted to follow her, but she bade him go back.

The firelight burned brightly in the cottage windows as she passed; a soft gray mist, threatening rain or snow, brooded over the silent fields; there was a sluggish dampness creeping up from the grass, and the narrow field-path was slippery with oozing red clay. The wind had fallen, but the cold was intense. Dym hardly felt it as she plodded wearily on. There was the stile where patient Humphrey had so often awaited her. How long ago it seemed since those November days when she and Mrs. Chichester were alone at Ingleside, and Humphrey and she had taken those twilight walks! She had thought those days very dull and heavy, but how happy they seemed by comparison now!

As though chiming in with her thoughts, Mr. Nethecote overtook her just as she reached the door of Nidderdale Cottage; he came up panting and out of breath.

"Miss Elliott, this is a sight for sore eyes; who would have thought of seeing you down here on such an evening?"

"It is very cold," returned Dym, shivering; the gray humidity all at once seemed to oppress her.

"It means mischief," observed Humphrey, sententiously. "We shall have sleet or snow or both before long. You must make up your mind to stay here till morning, Miss Elliott. I only hope the Duchess will not be benighted."

"Is not Miss Nethecote at home?" faltered Dym. What if after all she were unable to accomplish her errand! But Humphrey's next words relieved her.

"Oh, she is only over at Grace Dunster's. That girl of theirs—crazy Deb, as they call her—has been taken with fits again. Phil came over crying early in the morning. The Duchess has been there all day."

"And when do you think she will be home?" interrupted Dym, breathlessly; but Humphrey could not tell.

"If she does not come in another hour she will not be able to come at all," was all the scanty comfort he could give; "for the fields will be impassable, and, for the matter of that, the road too; maybe after all she'll stop the whole night with Grace. They say another seizure will finish Deb."

"Then I shall go back," was the prompt decision. "Thank

you, Mr. Nethecote," as Humphrey took up his straw hat again "but I would rather—much rather—go alone, please."

"Nay, nay, I'll see you safely through the fields; but you had better stay, Miss Elliott. After all, the Duchess may be back, and our old housekeeper will take care of you. Now I think of it, Honor has an appointment quite early to-morrow morning, so she will be sure to send me word if she cannot come. Anyhow, come in and warm yourself, and have a cup of tea." But Dym was not to be persuaded.

"I would rather get back to the village before a snow-storm comes on."

"Oh, you will do that over and over again; besides, I'm fairly seasoned, and am safe not to lose my way."

Dym almost stamped her little foot in her impatience: in her present soreness she could not tolerate Humphrey's lumbering old-fashioned courtesy.

"When I say a thing I mean it, Mr. Nethecote. I have my own reasons. I am very unhappy, and should be bad company. I would rather walk back alone." And Dym's tone was such that Mr. Nethecote, gentleman as he was, could not persist.

"Nay, nay, if you will be so willful," he said, with his kind smile, "well, hasten back, and go by the road. But even here Dym would have her way.

"It is twice as long, and I am so tired," she returned, pettishly; but her heart misgave her as she saw Humphrey's slouchy figure disappear: he was too good-natured to take offense at her abruptness, but there was a disappointed hurt look in his eyes as he turned to leave her. "Make all the haste you can, and take care how you climb the stone fences," he had said; "you may miss the stepping-stones in the dark;" and Dym had answered absently and sped on her way.

She was quite at home in the dark fields, and rather scorned the idea of missing her way; her only bugbear, Squire Trevor's cattle, were safely foddered for the night. But, now, all at once, some chill presentiment made her regret Humphrey almost before she had taken a dozen steps; she little thought the faithful fellow fully meant to follow her, only Dr. Grey had stepped up to the cottage and detained him.

Dym scolded herself for the feeling vigorously. "I did not sleep well last night, and I suppose that makes me nervous,"

she said, "and these gray low skies seem to crush one. Hark! what is that?" as some snorting sound was plainly audible near her. It was not very easy to discern anything plainly in that uncertain light, but before she had gone many yards farther a pair of dark eyes and two formidable horns were clearly visible.

Dym was London-bred, and she had never been able to overcome her fear of horned oxen. In the daylight the clumsy gambols of a playful cow would sometimes make her heart beat faster; she had heard terrible stories of Squire Trevor's black bull Cerberus. Not long ago he had nearly gored a boy to death, and since then he had never been permitted to be at large, though, as he was of very fine breed, Mr. Trevor had not condemned him to death. Could Cerberus have broken bounds and be wandering over the wintry fields? Dym caught sight of a fragment of rope, and at the same moment a loud defiant bellow warned her of her enemy's approach. If Dym's life had depended upon it, she could not have suppressed the scream that rose to her lips as she turned round and made for the low stone wall which in Yorkshire replaces our southern hedges. The slippery paths were impediment enough, but fear literally winged her feet; the darkness and her own terror magnified everything. In her imagination she could hear the hoofs behind her, and the warm breath of the infuriated bull. "You will miss the stepping-stones in the darkness. Be careful how you climb the stone fences," Humphrey had said to her, as though Dym were likely to take heed to her footsteps in that crazy terror of hers.

The stone wall was reached, and Dym was clambering over it with feet and hands, when something soft certainly touched her foot, and with another cry she threw herself forward, dislodging the topmost stones in her haste, and one perilously loose rolled down, and in another moment Dym was lying under it in the wet clay, with her ankle either dislocated or broken. The blow was a cruel one, but Dym's first feeling was one of relief—the wall was between her and Cerberus; she would hardly have clasped her hands in that mute thankfulness if she had not known that Cerberus was quietly cropping the grass on the other side. He was seeking his way to his warm shed when Dym crossed his path, and he had

trotted after her with the most amicable intentions. Nothing but the goad or a red waistcoat ever irritated Cerberus, and the boy in question had deliberately infuriated him before Cerberus quietly pitched him over the hedge.

Dym listened to the crisp munching on the other side of the wall for some time before she attempted to rise. She must go back to Nidderdale Cottage, she thought, with a little shame of what Humphrey would say. If she had only followed his counsel, and gone back by the road, this accident would never have happened. How her ankle hurt her! She must have wrenched it in her haste, or some stone had struck her, she hardly knew which. She raised herself cautiously, but the intense agony of the effort extorted a groan, and then she felt a coldness come over her face, and knew she was fainting.

When she came to herself again, she lay and deliberated what she could do; the pain and faintness made her feel unlike herself; she argued as though some one else was lying in her place. "There comes the sleet. Oh, how icy cold it is, and how numb my hands are getting! No one will come over these fields to-night, and if I lie here till morning I shall catch my death of cold, or die, and then nobody will know how sorry I am; and I am not fit to die," thought the poor child. "It is only half a mile to Nidderdale Cottage," she continued. "My ankle feels as though it were broken, but perhaps I might make shift to do it on my hands and knees, only I could never climb the next wall. If I managed to crawl that distance, there would only be one more field between me and the road, and I could call out, and perhaps a passer-by might hear me. They will all be so frightened at the Great House if I am here all night." And, as though this thought gave her courage, Dym made another heroic effort, but a fresh access of torture brought on the faintness again. She only managed to free herself from the stone and prop herself up against the wall. The bodily anguish she endured deadened her in a great measure to the cold; only the driving sleet made her giddy, and she covered her face with her cloak and closed her eyes.

"If I am to die, I suppose I had better say my prayers," thought Dym. Her clothes were getting drenched and stiffened on her, and the pain was making her light-headed. All at once it came upon her how Will had once lain under a wall

while the lightning played round him, and how they had taken him up for dead.

"I wonder who will be the first to find me?" moaned Dym. "What do they say when things like this happen? 'Died by the visitation of God;' but Humphrey will tell them it was all my willfulness."

"How disappointed he looked, dear old fellow!" she went on, presently. "Why did I not let him come with me? I do everything wrong now, and nobody cares, not even the good God, or He would stop this dreadful sleet, and let one star—one little star—shine out on me. Oh, this terrible darkness and silence! and how my brain is burning! I wonder what they are doing up at Ingleside." And then all at once there came on the unhappy girl a sick longing for a voice, the touch of a hand, the warmth of a fireside. "How warm and cosy it must be in my little room at home! Oh, if some one would carry me to my own little bed! What would Will say if he knew I was lying out on the ground this cold dark night?"

"*Qui patitur vincit.* Who said that? Will, Will; but this pain is so dreadful, and I am so young to be dying out here all alone. If he knew, I am sure he would forgive me. O good God, I cannot bear this agony any longer."

Dym must have fainted again in the despairing attempt to raise herself, for when her consciousness returned the sleet had ceased, and a chill night wind swept over the lonely fields; and, as though in answer to her childish prayer, two or three stars gemmed the blackness of the sky.

Dym forgot her stiffened limbs as the friendly light greeted her eyes. "'As one star differeth from another star in glory.' I remember Will preached on that once. Perhaps after all there is mercy in letting me die like this, for if I grew old I might miss my way at the end; it is so hard trying to be good. What would Will say if he knew I were dying and had not said my prayers? 'Lighten our darkness—' that is the prayer that will suit me best now; that and the Lord's Prayer, if I am not too weary to say it."

Dym interlaced her numb fingers; but the words would not let themselves be said. Fragments of chants, scraps of hymns, mingled with the several clauses. "Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom, lead thou me on. The night is dark; oh, so dark," moaned Dym, "and I am far from home, far from

home. Oh, Mrs. Chichester, I never hated him—never, never; only Beatrix put a millstone in place of my heart."

A little gray face lay against the stony wall; the numb hands were folded piteously under the warm cloak; then all at once it quivered into life; something warm and bushy sprang upon her; two little paws scratched at her; something licked her face lovingly, and whined.

Dym gave a hoarse hysterical cry. "Oh, Kiddle-a-wink! dear little Kiddle-a-wink!" and a moment after she was lying in Honor's arms.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DRAWN OUT OF MANY WATERS.

HONOR gave a soft inarticulate cry, as a mother-bird who sees her nestling lie with broken wing on the ground. She bent over the little figure with infinite pity and yearning.

"Miss Elliott! Dym! Merciful heavens! poor child, poor child!" The rigid unnatural posture, the marble hands clinched, yet drooping, the gray face bowed down upon the breast,—no wonder if for the moment Honor shuddered, as though out in the winter's night she had met death face to face, till the dog's whining caresses stirred the recumbent form into life.

Dym felt after speech as a drowning man seeks for breath; but her voice sounded from afar—weak, broken, almost lost.

"God sent His angel—don't touch me, Honor. Oh, my foot! my foot!" she moaned.

"Have you hurt it, love? Tell me what has happened. Brave little Kiddle-a-wink, you have found her for me when I might have passed her in the darkness; there, let me hold you, so." There was a closing of soft fur around her, as though Honor were wrapping her up in her own mantle. Honor's arms propped her now instead of the stony walls; Honor's warm vigorous hands strove to bring warmth to the frozen fingers. Now she held them to her lips, and now hid them in her bosom.

"I could not pray, but He has sent you, Honor." She felt easy now, lying with her head on Honor's lap. The pallid lips were kissed into speech; endurance of pain was possible when the horror of darkness and silence was folded away.

"How did it happen?" repeated Honor, in her soft monotone, half wondering, half to herself.

"It was Cerberus; he frightened me. I fell in climbing the wall, and a stone rolled down and crushed me," panted Dym, in short separate sentences. "It was my fault; all my fault."

"Hush; don't think of that now. How long have you been lying here? Poor child! as though she could tell me that!" interrupted Honor, catching herself up.

"What time is it?" replied Dym, faintly. "If I knew that, I could tell you."

Honor looked up at the stars. "It must be near midnight," she said, reflectively.

Dym shuddered. "I heard the bells chime six as I passed the village. I have been lying here five hours; five long hours. Honor, what are you doing?" as Miss Nethecote raised the head gently from her lap.

"You will be brave, darling; you will not mind staying here a little while alone. I will leave Kiddle-a-wink." But Dym clung to her with a sobbing cry.

"No, no!"

"I must fetch Humphrey, Sweet; you will die if you lie here any longer. In a few minutes, only a few minutes, I will be back with wine and warm wrappers, and Humphrey shall carry you home." But Honor's cheerfulness faltered a little as the numb fingers closed round her neck.

"No, no; you must not go."

"Dym, for your brother's sake. A winter's night in these fields, and you will be a cripple for life. For God's sake let me fetch Humphrey."

"Oh, Honor, stay with me; if you leave me in this darkness and silence, I shall die. I am not cold now, not very. If you would only lay me down again, I feel I could sleep."

She slid down from Honor's arms as she spoke. Torpor was creeping over her and making her voice drowsy.

The tears rolled down Miss Nethecote's face; a sort of despair seized her. "Dear Lord, help us!" she whispered.

"How can I leave her? But we shall both die." She had drawn off her furred mantle and wrapped Dym in it, and already premonitory shivers shook her from head to foot; her grand woman's frame felt suffering acutely. She shrank from it with a healthy loathing of pain.

"If I knew what to do! if I dared go in spite of her entreaties!" And then a sudden idea struck her. She called Kiddle-a-wink, and, tying her white handkerchief round the dog's neck, took a little chain and locket from her bosom, and carefully twisted it in and out through the white folds. On the locket was the Chichester motto, *Qui patitur vincit*, and inside was a brown curly lock, evidently severed from a man's head. Then she clapped her hands. "Kiddle-a-wink, find Guy!" she cried; and the sagacious little animal, giving one short, delighted bark, set off through the dark fields in the direction of Ingleside.

Honor had two good reasons for sending her forlorn hope to Ingleside. Humphrey in all probability would have given her up, and have gone to bed; and, as he was a sound sleeper, Kiddle-a-wink's scratchings and whinings would never have woke him. At Ingleside they kept later hours. The squire was much given to prowling about the grounds late at night; and if he were within, Honor knew Kiddle-a-wink well enough to be sure he would rouse him by his dismal howlings on the terrace.

As it happened, Mr. Chichester was just calling in Kelpie from a midnight hunt after cats, when he felt himself gently pulled by the lappels of his coat, and in another moment Kiddle-a-wink was capering and fussing about his feet, and whining delightedly.

Guy had a soft spot in his heart for all dumb creatures, and he stooped down and patted the Skye terrier kindly.

"Why, Kiddle-a-wink, old fellow, how do you come here at this hour of the night? and what have you done with your mistress? Down, Kelpie boy: don't be jealous. Halloo! what's this?" as Kiddle-a-wink's unusual necklace attracted his observation. The little dog sat up and begged, as Guy examined the handkerchief and chain narrowly. He turned pale as he did so, and, strong man as he was, his hand shook. There was the H. N. in Honor's beautiful embroidery, and the locket which years ago he had once hung round her white

neck. *Qui patitur vincit.* "That must be my motto as well as yours, Guy," she had whispered, softly. "It will always be yours, Honor bright," had been his lover-like answer.

"She is in trouble; she wants me. Oh, Kiddle-a-wink, my brave dog, what does this mean?" And, as though the dog's instinct understood the tone of anguish, the little animal gave another short bark, and ran forward.

"Follow him, Kelpie. Hie, good dog; seek! seek!" And both dogs bounded forward, and the squire followed.

Dym seemed sinking into sleep, when she started up with something of a scream.

"Are you there, Honor?"

"Yes, dear;" but Honor's voice was low and suffering.

"I thought it was a dream; but my foot woke me. Oh, Honor, I came to-night to ask you to forgive me."

"You need not remember that now. Is the pain very bad, dear?"

"Yes, and I feel stiff and sore all over. Did you say I should be a cripple for life, Honor?"

"Nay, God forbid. I think He will send us some help soon. I hope so," she continued, wearily.

"How faint your voice sounds! Honor, will it hurt you too? I never thought of that; and you have wrapped me in your warm cloak, and are shivering. I cannot suffer it; you shall leave me—go!"

"Not now; we will wait a little longer. This wall shelters us from the wind."

"How good you are to me!" laying her cold lips against Honor's hand. "It is coals of fire; I don't deserve it. Are you sure you have forgiven me?"

"As I would be forgiven. Child, why do you talk so, when we are both out alone with Him?" And though Honor's teeth chattered, and she could not repress the cold shuddering that went through her, her pale face was lifted to the wintry sky with an expression of perfect peace. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him," were the words that rose to her lips.

But it was with a voice unsteady with joy that she cried, "Guy, Guy!" as a dark figure came striding towards them. "Oh, Dym, wake! He has sent His angel," she said, with a sweet, tremulous laugh; and her hands were stretched out and grasped, as Guy had never dared to grasp them for years.

"Honor, my darling, what has happened?" Then, recoiling as the dim figure on Honor's lap stirred at his voice—"Good God! another woman! Not Miss Elliott? Good heavens, and we thought she was with you!" gasped the squire.

"She has hurt her foot, and has been lying here six mortal hours. Gently, touch her gently, Guy," as with an exclamation of pity he stooped and lifted Dym in his arms; but, as though pain were making her delirious, she clung to Honor.

"It is the squire himself; it is Mr. Chichester. Let him take you, dear; he will not hurt you." But Dym still resisted.

"Tell him that you have forgiven me. Tell him it is all right between us, and that you have given your life for me," she cried, hysterically.

Such a pitiful look came over Guy Chichester's face in the darkness; but he only said, "Hush! it is all right, my child," and lifted her up, wrapping the fur cloak carefully round her, as though she were an infant. Perhaps the meaning of Dym's words came to him as he felt the soft furs, for he groaned, and said, "Oh, Honor, my generous Honor!" as though some terrible fear smote him.

"Come," he cried, impatiently, offering his hand; but even with that assistance Honor could scarcely move her cramped and frozen limbs. "Lean on my shoulder, dear; drag yourself along. I am strong enough for both," he kept saying. But, with all her brave efforts, he had to lay Dym down again on the wet ground, and lift Honor over the fences, and, in spite of his burning desire to get them home, Honor could only move stiffly and slowly, clinging to Guy's disengaged arm.

"This night will be the death of you both, my darling. Do try to walk faster," he implored, in an agitated voice; but Honor shook her head.

"I think you must leave me, Guy; I can do no more."

"Leave you? Never! We will all die first. Courage, dear; lean on me more heavily. We shall come in sight of the cottage directly. And Honor, as though compelled by that strong hand, dragged herself forward again a few paces.

"There is some one coming to meet us; hold up, Honor darling. I think it is Humphrey. Nethecote—Nethecote, I say!"

Guy's despairing halloo would almost have roused the dead.

"Coming, squire, coming!" shouted back Humphrey; and in another moment Honor tottered—nay, almost fell—into her brother's arms.

Humphrey had been unaccountably restless that night, and had wandered down the road as far as Woodside, when the squire's voice had hailed him. The poor fellow was in a pitiable state of perplexity and alarm as the miserable little cavalcade came in sight.

"What's to do, squire—what has happened?" he ejaculated.

"Enough has happened: don't talk, man; rouse the women-servants and send down for Dr. Grey," was the squire's agitated answer. "Some of us will pay for this night's work, I expect." And as soon as Humphrey's slow brains comprehended the exigences of the case, he brought all his common sense and shrewd masculine management to bear on it.

The drowsy maids were roused, fires lighted, beds warmed, and strong hot drinks brewed in haste. Dym's cry of anguish as they handled her foot brought up Guy himself to the door, to forbid its being touched till Dr. Grey could be brought, and Humphrey was soon on his way to fetch him.

Honor, though faint and exhausted, would permit no one to attend to her till Dym was safely put in her warm bed; she was still in her damp garments, hanging over Dym's pillow, when Dr. Grey arrived.

"Miss Nethecote, this will never do," he said, sternly: "you will have a worse touch of your old enemy, pleurisy, than you have had in your life if you do not instantly go to bed and take my remedies." And Honor, though reluctantly, was compelled to obey.

"I shall have two patients on my hands, but Miss Elliott will be the worse," was Dr. Grey's observation when he came down-stairs. Humphrey, who was sitting by the fire with his hands over his eyes, shuddered and gave a low groan; the two other men exchanged glances—poor Humphrey's secret was not difficult to read.

"And the ankle?"

"Dislocated—not broken. Oh, we shall get that right presently; but she is in a good deal of pain."

Mr. Chichester walked towards the fire-place, and the doctor followed him.

"Grey, you don't say how Miss Nethecote is," he observed, in a low voice.

"Oh, well, we shall see to-morrow; I am coming up early. Has Miss Elliott a mother or sister?"

"Neither."

"That is unfortunate. I am afraid we must look forward to a long bout of nursing; she cannot have lain on the damp ground for all those hours without incurring terrible mischief."

"I am afraid not," was the grave response. "And Miss Nethecote?"

"I have left her pretty comfortable," was the evasive answer; and, as though fearful of any further questioning, the doctor reiterated injunctions as to quiet and care, and hurriedly left the room.

"Squire, does he think she will die?" exclaimed Humphrey. The Yorkshireman's good-natured face looked almost haggard as he asked the question.

Mr. Chichester started. "For God's sake, man, whom do you mean?" he said, irritably.

"Miss Elliott. Nay, nay," coming up to him and putting his hand on his shoulder soothingly, "you didn't think I meant our Honor, squire? Why, the Duchess is doing finely; you heard him say so just now."

Mr. Chichester's face quivered all over, but he turned it aside quickly.

"I don't know, Humphrey," speaking in a voice half choked with emotion; "I am afraid this is a bad business. Fancy taking off her own cloak to cover that poor girl! I always said she was nearer an angel than a woman."

"Ay, ay," groaned Humphrey, "there is no one like our Honor."

"She was glad enough to see me to-night; I could see her stretching out her hands to me half a field off. I may win her yet—who knows, Humphrey?"

"God speed the day, squire!"

"Poor old fellow, it is hard upon you too, to-night. There, I will not keep you any longer from Honor. Come down and tell me when she is asleep, and how that poor child fares. I am afraid I have been thinking more of Honor than of her." And Mr. Chichester sighed as he drew his chair to the fire and prepared for his long watch.

The squire was right in his dismal auguries. Before twenty-four hours were over, Dym was in the agonies of a sharp attack of rheumatic fever, and Honor, only divided from her by one thin wall, was wrestling fiercely with death. The cold had struck her, inflammation of the lungs set in, and neither doctor nor nurse knew how it would end, or if her strong vitality would gain the ascendency. "You have given your life for me," Dym had cried in her semi-delirium: she little knew how nearly her words had come true!

"If I die, promise me you will bring Guy to me, that I may bid him good-by," she said one day to Humphrey; and another time she bade him bring the chain and locket and hang it round her neck.

"You won't die, Duchess?" implored poor Humphrey, as his shaking hand fulfilled the injunction; the plain hard-featured face was growing more haggard day by day. As for the squire, he looked heart-broken.

"I don't know: I think it would be best," she answered, dreamily; "not for you, dear old Humphrey, perhaps," stroking his face, "but for him—and me," she added, after a minute.

"You would not say so if you saw him, Honor."

Honor's thin fingers caressed the locket lovingly.

"How does he look?" she whispered.

"Out of heart, as a man who had lost his guiding star—all astray and lost like."

"Tell him it is better so; there is perfect faith there—no, don't say that, perhaps it will sound like a reproach; be kind to him, Humphrey. If I live, who knows? No, I must not think of that." And Honor turned her face wearily to the wall.

They thought she was sleeping, and feared to disturb her, when all the time the poor soul was making a gallant fight against depression.

"His will—teach me to say it," she whispered. "Am I ready to die, when one face comes between me and heaven—always, always? Oh, Guy, not to know I love you as I do—Guy, my hero, my glorious Guy—my one and only love!" Here she wrung her hands and wept piteously, and fell to praying.

He had called her an angel, but she was only a woman, a poor weak woman, after all. Honor's faith was childlike,

but the damps from the Valley of the Shadow of Death were tarnishing her shield; the intense vitality of her nature shuddered at the thoughts of decay.

"Life is sweet, after all. We never know how sweet till we fear to lose it," she said to Mr. Fortescue, who had come on his ministry of consolation. "If it were not wrong, I should like you to pray that I may live a little longer."

"You must offer up this reluctance as a sacrifice," he returned, gently. "We all pray that you may live, Miss Nethecote; but there is one in the next room to whom death would be a release."

He spoke of Dym. And indeed her sufferings were terrible; Nature was taking her revenge. The dislocated ankle was Dym's least trouble: the fever raged like molten fire in her veins; sometimes she grew delirious with it, every movement was torture; it was an aggravated form of the same illness that had crippled William Elliott for life.

Dym used to moan for her brother from morning to night. One day the squire, who was prowling before the door as usual, overheard her.

Two days afterwards, as she woke up refreshed from sleep, she saw a face bending over her in the twilight.

"My dear Dym!"

"Oh, Will, Will!" Two bandaged arms strove to reach him, but failed; the wan little face he scarcely knew turned itself wearily on the pillow. "It is such pain to move! Come nearer, Will. Oh, is it really and truly you?"

"Yes, it is I, Dimples," came in the old quaint voice; but William Elliott had a huskiness in his throat as he spoke, and more than once he had to take off his spectacles and clear their mistiness.

"Put them away; I like you better without them," pleaded Dym, in her weak voice. "Mrs. Chichester, may I have a candle, please? I want to see how Will looks." But Mrs. Chichester had slipped out of the room, thinking the brother and sister would like to meet alone.

"I will stir the fire; there—there is a glorious blaze! Don't you want your drink now? I used always to wake thirsty."

William Elliott might have been used to nursing, by the way he propped up his sister on her pillows and administered

the cooling drink; either he was skillful or Dym was better, for she felt little pain.

"How good it is to have you do things for me again, Will!" she whispered, gratefully, as he laid her down. Will's kiss said he was glad too. Dym was not capable of much speech, but she lay and feasted her eyes on him as though she had been hungering and thirsting for the sight for a long time. Mr. Elliott did not trust himself to say much either, but once he leaned over her and blessed her hurriedly.

"My poor little child-sister, I have nearly lost you," he said, tremulously.

Dym gave him one of her old sweet smiles.

"I am better now: am I not, Mrs. Chichester?" as her friend re-entered, fearful of any prolonged conversation.

"Much better; but the doctor says we must be quiet. Mr. Elliott, you must only look at her to-day; she is not allowed to talk."

"She is not much to look at," returned her brother, fondly and sadly: "you have only white Christmas roses in your cheeks, my poor Dimples!"

"Oh, I shall be better now you have come," replied Dym, brightly; her youthful hopefulness was beginning to assert itself with the cessation of pain. Will's face was strength and life to her, she told Mrs. Chichester, as she came to give her her parting kiss before going to Ingleside.

Mrs. Chichester spent all her days at Nidderdale Cottage, but she always went home with her son to dinner. It was employment for the squire's restlessness to go to and fro on all sorts of errands between the Cottage and the Great House; his most frequent excuse was Humphrey. "He wants some one to sit with him, poor old fellow," he said; but it must be doubted whether the squire's influence was the most cheering for Humphrey. It was better when William Elliott came, and Mr. Chichester's reserve broke down, and he talked of his fears openly; and it was better for Humphrey too, who had now a sympathizing hearer on everything that related to Dym.

The guests were all gone from the Great House when William Elliott took up his quarters there. The day after the accident Guy had called his cousin to him.

"Trichy," he said, putting his hands on her shoulders, "I want you to do me a favor."

"What is it, Guy?" she returned, looking up wistfully at his sad face.

"Get all these people away. I am in trouble, dear; I cannot play the host any longer when the light of my eyes is being taken from me." And Beatrix, who read the truth in the haggard sleepless eyes, could not refuse to do him this kindness. And when they were all gone he sat down wearily in his old place, and his mother came to him and put her arm round his neck.

"Guy, do not give way so; while there is life there is hope," she whispered; and so in his hour of weakness she comforted him.

Mrs. Chichester had liked William Elliott for her son's sake, but she very soon grew to love him for his own. His was a nature formed for sympathy; out of suffering he had learned to pity; out of endurance he had grown wise.

The peculiar pride and reticence of Guy Chichester's character had broken down under this sudden shock; he no longer resisted the hand that probed the sore places so gently and firmly; the old wounds had yawned afresh; now was the time for the pouring in of the oil and wine.

Night after night the two men sat together, and in those long hours of unrestrained intercourse William Elliott learned new phases of the generous eccentric nature that, self-directed and self-sustained, had wandered at times from the right way, and whose substance and youth had been wasted on one object. The friendship ripened daily. Mrs. Chichester rejoiced that her son's fastidious taste was suited with such an admirable companion: in spite of his many infirmities William Elliott had charming manners; when he found himself in congenial society, he was apt to relax from his gravity and indulge in that sweet playfulness that seemed natural to him.

Mrs. Chichester used to watch them as they paced the terrace together. What a strange pair they looked! William Elliott with his spare bowed form, irresistibly reminding one of "the woman who was bound by Satan for so many years," and "was in no ways able to lift herself"—for there was always something painful at first sight in the clergyman's deformed figure—and Guy's herculean proportions and the grand face with its short tawny beard.

Mrs. Chichester often talked to Mr. Elliott about his sister.

Will heard that Dym had borne her prolonged sufferings most heroically; she used to cry quietly to herself sometimes, but she seldom complained; when she was at her worst it was only "Will! Will!" The doctor and nurse told the same tale.

"If she were my own daughter, I could hardly have grown to love her more," Mrs. Chichester assured him, with tears in her eyes. It spoke well for Dym's real sweetness at the bottom, that in spite of her willfulness she had made so true a friend.

Dym's painful nights were endurable now, when she had Will's visits to look forward to in the morning; he always stopped with her an hour or two.

Dym had taken a decided turn for the better now. From the day when she woke to find Will's face bending over her, she had begun steadily to amend; the fever had left her, and, though the weakness was great, the tinge of returning health stole back to the white face.

"You will do now: Dr. Grey says in a few weeks you will be as well as ever; but you will have to be careful for a long time," Will said to her, one day, when he found her propped up upon the couch in a nest of pillows, and looking almost as fragile as the snowdrops on her little table.

"Then I shall not be a cripple for life, or like you, dear," whispered Dym, speaking out her fear for the first time.

"Why, of course not! What a silly Dimples to think of such a thing!" was his tender answer, as she hid her face gladly—oh, so gladly!—on his shoulder. "Mine was a complication of disease, aggravated by neglect: if I had had nurses like yours, Dym—Why, you silly child," as a slight sob warned him he was trenching on dangerous ground, "do you think I repent of what has given me so much experience? Don't you know, what is, is best?"

"But I cannot bear to think how you suffered, Will."

"Pooh-pooh! what nonsense!" he returned, merrily; but a slight dew made his glasses misty again. "Has it not gained me my name of 'Conqueror'? Why, I would rather go bowed all my life than think of your pretty figure being spoiled. You must grow fat, Dym: you look far too transparent for my peace of mind."

"Will," she said, seriously, "you have never told me how it is you are spared so long from St. Luke's."

"Haven't I? Ah, well, you must ask Mr. Chichester about that."

"Of course, I knew it was all his kindness," returned Dym, reddening like a rose.

"My dear Dym," replied her brother, "I begin to think your squire is the most generous mortal living."

Dym gave a great sigh of assent.

"Do you know, all the time you were ill he either wrote or telegraphed to me daily? but the kindness that beat all others was the way he got me leave of absence from St. Luke's."

"I have not heard—how was that?" inquired Dym.

"Why, he fetched me himself." And, as his sister uttered an exclamation of incredulity, he continued, "True as my name is William Elliott. I found him engrossing the whole fire one evening when I came in from the schools.

"'She is not worse, old fellow, but she wants to see you,' were his first words—I suppose I turned a little pale when I saw him—'so button up your warmest coat and come off with me.' And when I hesitated, I found he had made it all right with the vicar, and had actually brought down a deputy-curate—a Mr. Lythe—in my place; he is just ordained to priest's orders, and one of the hardest-working men I ever knew—just the man for St. Luke's; and he actually got the vicar to consent to his carrying me off for two months."

"Two months! oh, how delightful, Will!" cried Dym; but she was too weak to bear such good news, and in spite of her efforts the tears would come.

"He is so good, and I have behaved so badly towards him. Oh, Will! have you heard—" And perhaps the happiest moment Dym had known for months was when she had sobbed out her confession to her brother and received his sympathizing kiss.

"You have been sorely punished, my poor child," he said; "few have to expiate their faults to such a bitter extent; but I hope we have seen the worst of this trouble now." But Will did not tell Dym that he had seen Honor, and that Honor had believed herself to be dying; Dym did not learn that for many days afterwards. "She is better," or "more comfortable," was all they said to Dym's anxious inquiries. For a little time Dym's sufferings had to a certain extent

deadened her anxiety, but with her returning convalescence came remorseful fears for Honor.

"If I could only see her! if you would carry me in and lay me down beside her for a few minutes!" Dym would implore her nurses; but they always put her off with some excuse or other: she was sleeping, or she must not be disturbed, or it would be bad for Dym to be removed, and so on.

One day, the second after William Elliott had arrived, Humphrey came to him. Honor thought herself worse, she wanted a clergyman; Mr. Fortescue had gone up to London for a day, would Mr. Elliott come to her?

Will bowed his head and followed him silently. He knew now it was Guy Chichester's beloved to whom he was to minister.

But he never forgot his first impression of Honor Nethecote. Honor thought she was dying because weakness had quelled her; the grand figure lay bowed, broken, waiting for some unknown change; the wide-open eyes had lost their light, the flesh-tints resembled marble; lips, nostrils, cheeks, were all of the same neutral dead-white; the sunshine seemed faded out of the brown hair, the splendid arms and hands had fallen prone on the coverlet.

She had gathered herself up with all her strength to die; there was meek martyrdom in her aspect, but the strength had not come. Instead of that, William Elliott read weakness, a fading hope akin to despair, feminine tremors, and something else.

He took one of the passive hands. She looked at him calmly, but without a smile.

"You have sent for me, Miss Nethecote—you think yourself worse?"

"I feel as though I were dying." Her voice was resigned and pathetic.

"Perhaps you fear death?" groping his way a little, until the unknown mind should reveal itself.

"Not for myself."

"Ah!"

Her bosom heaved, she lifted her hands deprecatingly; she desired sympathy, but pity was abhorrent to her.

"You will not allow yourself to hope—you wish life too

much, perhaps; you have let yourself go, as it were, but you are not resigned."

"Oh that I were! but I am not. No, not even when I look at that"—pointing to a picture of the Crucifixion that hung opposite her bed. "I pray—I suffer," whispering out her words, "but my will—ah, there it is—my will refuses to yield."

"Poor soul! yet you will not die."

Honor's lips unclosed; she panted; her wistful eyes questioned him—she had no words.

"You have renounced the world too soon," he returned, pityingly; "I read life, not death, in your face. Did not your doctor reassure you?"

"I did not believe him; doctors will not tell the truth," was the brief answer.

"Your nurses?"

"They have deceived me before."

"Your brother, then?"

"Poor Humphrey—oh, he was not disinterested!"

"Then you may trust me—will you not?" in a mild, beseeching voice.

Honor gave him her first smile. "I sent for you to read the Office for the Dying."

"Shall we say the Thanksgiving together instead?" was his reply; and when he had risen from his knees he said, solemnly, "You sent for me to prepare you for death, Miss Nethecote, but I have a harder duty than that before me: it is rather to prepare you for life. 'Drawn out of many waters.' Ah, we have our work of love to do after that. Do you think you have done the best you could with your life?"

"Perhaps not," she answered, humbly. A ray of joy shone in her eyes; there was revived life in her aspect; he had given her the strong cordial of hope; she was weak, but oppressed no longer.

"Strength is never given us before the time. You did not will to die. Well, perhaps not, neither has He willed it. He has never bidden you to give up. Be comforted, Miss Nethecote. He has still work for you to do."

"Oh, how you console me!"

"That you may console others. This gift of life will be joyful news to others beside yourself, Miss Nethecote; dedicate

it afresh nobly. Are there none beside yourself to be forgiven and comforted?"

Did she understand him? The meek pathetic eyes grew radiant.

"Ah, if I dared! if it would only be right!" she faltered.

"Unto seventy times seven: have you forgotten that, Miss Nethecote?"

The white lips quivered. "What, have I been wrong all through? is that what you mean? Is it I who ought to have forgiven? You are a clergyman. I see, you know all; tell me."

"Not now; when you are stronger, perhaps. Say your *Te Deum* now, and try to sleep." And so he blessed her, and went. But not many days after she sent for him again.

"You must hear me now," she said; and the noble heart disburdened itself.

"These great souls sin deeply," was William Elliott's simple comment. "Now I know both sides and can judge fairly. You are a good woman, but you have been less generous than he. I am Guy Chichester's friend, and I dare to tell you of your faults."

"Oh, do," she humbly prayed him.

"You loved him *truly*, but you loved your own will better. You might have trusted him."

"I will," said Honor Nethecote; and she kept her word.

"When?" he inquired, softly.

"Wait a little: you will see," was her answer; and from that moment she began rapidly to amend.

William Elliott's prophecy was correct. From the day of his conversation with her there was a marked change in Honor.

Earnest in everything, she set herself to get well with all the strength of her womanly will: she did not linger over her convalescence as poor Dym was doing; the real vigor of her constitution asserted itself; in a marvelously short time she took off her sickness and declared herself well. She smiled with sweet incredulity when Dr. Grey quoted to her the two favorite sayings of the celebrated Bishop of Geneva—"Make haste slowly," and "Well enough is soon enough"—declaring he would have them written up in letters of gold in every room of convalescence; and when Honor scolded him for perverting such noble maxims to mere bodily uses, he returned,

seriously, "We are not always merciful to the poor body, or we should not lay such heavy burdens on it before it is fairly recruited and ready for work. You will not be the woman you were for a long time to come, Miss Nethecote; be careful. I am not sure yet that I shall not recommend your brother to take you southward for a winter or two." And more than once he repeated the same thing very gravely.

Honor did not refuse to hearken, but for all that she set her nurses at naught; and one wild Mareh day, when the winds seemed blowing from the four quarters of heaven, and the sunshine fell in broken streaks on the window-ledges, Honor crept into Dym's room, looking as fair and white as one of her favorite lilies.

Dym was lying alone, and feeling as dreary as the prospect outside; two gaunt poplars waved to and fro before her window; the bare boughs creaked in the gusty air; the low apple-trees flapped noisily; a robin flew down on the white garden path; the grasses shivered; and a whirl of gray dust was everywhere.

"Poor little robin out there in the cold;" thought Dym. "Ah, that was what Honor called me." She sighed at the remembrance, and half urned; and there was Honor looking at her, and in another moment they were clasped in each other's arms.

It was a long, clinging embrace, for community of suffering had united those two dissimilar natures indissolubly. The thin white faces met lovingly, but Honor was the first to disengage herself.

"I am very womanish and weak still," she said, with a little gentle effort after merriment; but Dym's agitation was infectious, and she subsided into her chair with wet eyes, as Dym still clung to her, and covered the hand she held with tears and kisses.

"Come, birdie, this will not do;" but Honor fondled her still more lovingly.

"You have been so ill, Honor, and all through me," said Dym. "I wonder you do not hate the sight of me. Will has told me how they feared for you."

"I thought I was at death's door, but he brought me back," replied Honor, gravely; but her tones shook a little. "I wanted sadly to see you, dear, but they would not let me.

Perhaps it was as well; my looks might have frightened you."

"You are not quite the same Honor now," returned Dym, in a distressed voice; and she was right: the beautiful eyes had a heavy look in them; the temples were blue-veined and had deep hollows; the wasted hands and arms were pitiful.

Honor gave a weak little laugh. "Comparisons are odious. You cannot talk yourself, Dym. You have lost all your pretty color, and your eyes are twice the size they ought to be."

"That is what Will says. Oh, Honor, you have seen Will!"

"Yes, I have seen him. If it were not for Humphrey, I think I should envy you your brother; as it is, for the future I shall reverence him almost as much as you do."

"I am so glad!" sighed Dym. "But is it not sad—his affliction, I mean? He is quite young, but he looks older than Mr. Nethecote."

"Does he? I did not notice. I only thought what a beautiful soul he must have to look and speak so; but then, you see, I always knew he must be good."

"Why, Honor?"

"Because you loved him so, and because he was Mr. Chichester's friend," answered Honor, simply; and just then the subject of their talk entered.

They were in the pretty little morning room that Honor called her boudoir, and which had been appropriated to Dym's use. Will gave a start of surprise when he saw Miss Nethecote; he thought to have found his sister alone, as usual; but, as he told Guy Chichester afterwards, he had never seen a prettier sight than those two women clinging together hand in hand.

The firelight played on Dym's rose-colored wrapper and loose shining hair. Honor leaned back a little wearily; she had knotted up her brown hair tightly, and by some quaint sweet fashion of her own wore a white cashmere dress, trimmed with soft fur at the neck and wrists; the full throat gleaming whitely from the dainty ruff; the calm repose, the full breathing life of the figure was in strange juxtaposition to the inert, hopeless lethargy in which he had seen it last.

A faint color rose to her face, as though his entrance stirred some memory.

"I hope I do not disturb you. I am glad to see you so much better, Miss Nethecote," holding her hand with congratulating pressure.

"Thank you, I am well;" but the trembling of the fingers was not lost on him.

"Forgive me if I contradict you," he returned, cheerily. "You are not so much above us poor mortals as that. You are still weak enough to be nervous."

"I have no nerves," she assured him, calmly.

"Not ordinary ones, I grant you: you are too finely tempered for that. Dym, Mr. Chichester has sent you these flowers," throwing her a bouquet of violets and snowdrops, at which Dym blushed brightly with surprise and pleasure. "He wants to know if you have any message for St. Luke's?"

"St. Luke's!" Miss Nethecote leaned back in her chair; there was a slight quiver of the nostrils; her eyelids flickered, and then swept her cheek. Will's eyes noted the sudden paleness. He smiled to himself, as though he thought Miss Nethecote's nerves were not invulnerable.

"It is a sudden fancy of his to go up by the mail-train to-night. Lythe has been writing up about some riot in the schools. I tell him it is madness to travel by night in such weather, but he is obstinate as usual. He is out riding now, but I suppose he will be back by evening."

Honor shielded her eyes with her hand; there was doubt, irresolution, a slight confusion, in her aspect; then she decided.

"Mr. Elliott."

Will almost started; the voice was changed and trembling.

"Will you give him a message from me?"

"A hundred, if you will," he returned, gayly.

She smiled; her color rose; a faint, fair tinge spread over brow, cheek, and neck, touching the delicate ear; there was a strange shining light in the brown eyes that almost dazzled him. She penciled a few words hastily on a slip of paper, and, crossing the room with weak slow footsteps, put it into his hand.

And this was what Guy Chichester read some hours afterwards:

"Come to me before you go.

"HONOR BRIGHT."

CHAPTER XIX.

"THE DAYS THAT ARE NO MORE."

"DEAR, are you asleep?" asked Honor, presently. With the twilight she had stolen back into Dym's room: the candles were still unlighted, but the pine-knots diffused a warm spicy odor through the room; the firelight played on the low ceiling and over the brackets and statuettes; the wind had lulled, and the moon shone through the uncurtained window, through which still waved the shadows of the gaunt poplars.

Dym lay so still that Honor had more than once fancied she was asleep.

"No; only thinking, Honor."

"So was I. How silent we have both been! Dym, have you ever tried to find out the reason of a sudden silence?"

"No, dear." Dym's tone was languid; she was on the dim border-land where the introspective meets melancholy; her thoughts were undefinable—a trifle sad. She roused into outer life with difficulty.

"I had a little sister once, and when we were children together, and this silence fell between us like a veil, my mother would lift up her hand and say, gently,—I can hear her quiet voice now,—'Hush, children, an angel is passing through the room;' and sometimes, so strong is childish faith, I could almost fancy a soft wing brushed past me."

"What a beautiful thought!" returned Dym, in an awe-struck voice.

"It teaches reverence in silence as well as words. 'The cloud of witnesses' are too often absent from our mind. Dym, there is something heavy on my heart to-night, as though some coming joy oppressed me. After all, there is something awful in a great happiness."

"Are you so happy, Honor?" And Dym sighed.

"Yes, happy; happier than I have ever been in my life. Dym, sometimes I fancy we are friends," her voice rounding and modulating into sweetness.

"Dear Honor, I trust so," throwing her arms round her neck; "if I were only worthy," she added, touched with sudden humility.

"Nay, worthiness has nothing to do with it: we have known too little of each other's deeds for that; it is more a matter of feeling."

"Well?"

"I feel—at least my instinct perceives—you love me."

"And you?"

"I reciprocate the feeling, certainly; but I am not a demonstrative woman to women; it is my nature to take care of people, so I have a soft place in my heart for you and Esther."

"That sounds cold."

"Perhaps I mean more than my words. Once we were together in a great suffering; since then I have longed to tell you of my trouble. You guessed I had one?" interrogatively.

"I feel as though I know it. You have a sad look in your eyes, Honor, sometimes when you think no one is looking; as though," added Dym, with a sudden feeling after truth,—"as though you had lost something."

Honor sighed. "So I had. I had lost my lover. Six years ago, Guy Chichester and I were to have been married."

A sudden start, almost a tremor, ran through Dym's frame. "Ah!" she cried; and then, as though involuntarily, "I always thought there was something between you. Poor Honor! dear Honor!" stroking her head. "But—but he likes you still?"

"He does; it is not his nature to change."

"Oh, Honor, it was surely not you?"

"What do you think?" she inquired, in a strangely quiet voice, "is Guy Chichester a man who could tire a woman's love?" And as Dym was only silent and hid her face in her neck, "There is not a moment since the day he first told me that he loved me in which I would not have laid down my life for him a dozen times over—ay, gladly, too—even when I refused to marry him."

"Who came between you, then? what does it mean?" asked Dym, faintly.

But Honor only answered, very proudly and sadly, "No one

came between us; we were always true to each other," and remained for a long time silent.

"It is a long story," she continued, as Dym hardly knew how to break the pause; "there are wheels within wheels. I hardly understand it myself. Perhaps we were both to blame; I begin to think so now. If Guy had been different, or if I had been a meek manageable woman, I might have been his wife years ago. Dym, have you ever heard of the Chichester temper?" And as Dym shook her head, "What, have you never heard the villagers talk of the old squire Guy's father? When I was little more than a child, I used to fear his very shadow."

"Mrs. Chichester very rarely speaks of him," returned Dym.

"Yet report says she loved him dearly, and that with all his faults he was never ungentle to her. Many families have an hereditary taint in them. If village gossip is to be believed, in old days the Chichester temper was a terror to their generation. Guy's father and grandfather were both headstrong violent men; and his great uncle, Heriot Chichester, murdered his sweetheart in a fit of jealousy."

"Oh, Honor, how terrible!"

"There are other tales more dreadful still. I have seen Guy turn pale when this story was repeated. According to the old traditions, all the men were brave and passionate and all the women were singularly gentle and beautiful. I have seen a picture of this Heriot Chichester, dressed as an officer in the Guards, and it is singular how much his face resembles Guy's."

"But his sweetheart!" faintly inquired Dym.

"I have seen her portrait too—a crayon sketch done by her lover's hand—and under it, written in a man's bold characters, 'My sweetheart Marjory.' She was a village girl, and he was educating her to be his wife, when one evening some rival made him believe her false, and in his madness he lifted his hand against her. The story says she kissed his hand with her dying lips, and cried out that she was innocent, and that she loved him still."

"Did they kill him?" asked Dym, shuddering over her own question.

"They would have hung him, of course, but in his remorse he shot himself in the very place where he had murdered his

victim. Do you know, murderer and suicide as he was, I never look at his portrait without pitying him? Poor miserable Heriot! It used to be a favorite name, but no Chichester has borne it since. I ought not to have told you this old story, perhaps, but it haunts me to-night in spite of myself.

"But I was speaking of the time when Guy and I were engaged. From the first his mother was my enemy; nay," as Dym started, "I do not wish to say a word against her. She was a good woman; under other circumstances we might have loved each other; but she could not forgive me for winning her son's heart.

"I think she would have been jealous of any daughter-in-law, for Guy was her only son, and she had made him her idol; but she chose to consider it a *mésalliance*—the whole affair was abhorrent in her eyes. All the Chichesters had married well. Some of their wives had noble blood in their veins; no one but that unfortunate Heriot had meditated an alliance beneath him. With all her gentleness, Mrs. Chichester is a very proud woman. In vain was it represented to her that I was a physician's daughter; in vain Humphrey, by worth and integrity, had achieved success and raised himself to his present position: she could not forget the old days when he was under-bailiff in her husband's service, and we lived in the old lodgings in the mill-house, and no one in Birstwith visited us. I am afraid there were bitter scenes up at the Great House. For a long time my life was made miserable by the dissensions.

"I ask you, was it right for any mother to come between two hearts that loved each other? I answer it now, as I did then, 'No.' I remained true to Guy.

"There was a young girl staying up at the Great House—his cousin Beatrix; and young as she was—scarcely more than a child—she had conceived an unfortunate attachment to Guy. Guy never saw it, never would see it. I believe he denies it still. Sometimes in our lives we are exposed to alien influences. From the first I mistrusted Beatrix. I knew she disliked and was jealous of me. I remember instances of petty spite which I was far too proud to notice.

"A little while before Guy and I plighted our troth to each other, I had the misfortune to be thrown continually into the society of one of his college friends. He made me an offer of marriage. I need not say it was declined, and in a way that

left him no ground for further advances. I do not wish even now to accuse any one, but I am sure, as far as a woman can be sure, that Sydney Mordaunt was a bad man; that he would have stopped at nothing to secure me. Such a passion as he had conceived could scarcely be a generous one. Unfortunately, in his despair he selected Beatrix as his confidante. Ah, Dym, as I told you, there were wheels within wheels. Every one was against me—his mother, Beatrix, and Sydney Mordaunt. But how they first poisoned Guy's mind against me I never knew, only that the tissue of half-truths must have been more deadly than a whole fabric of lies. I do not think Guy really believed them; but he grew a little stern in his manner. His lordly will asserted itself beforehand, and I was not a meek woman. Often he commanded where he ought to have sued. I was not one to yield where my reason was unsatisfied; no, not though I loved him better as the days went on.

"The first misunderstanding was a very trifling one. He wanted me to come up to Ingleside, to be introduced to some friends of his mother's, who were anxious to see me; but Humphrey was unwell, and I had promised to stay with him. It was the first clash of our wills. I saw a specimen of the Chichester temper then. He must have wanted me sorely, or they had twitted him with my unfeminine independence, for he never came near me for two days.

"I was so miserable without him that I forgave him the first moment I saw him, though I was aware he hardly showed fitting penitence for his fault. But a woman is seldom hard on her lover. I suppose my tacit submission soothed him, for things went on smoothly again between us, till the time came for fixing the wedding-day, and then there was another clashing of wills.

"For some reason that I am not clear about now, Humphrey had made me promise not to leave him till after the new year; but Guy, who was roving by nature, had made up his mind to winter in Rome. One day he came down to the cottage flushed and eager, and pressed me to name an early day in September. Strange to say, he had won over his mother to wish it too, and he was the bearer of a missive, in which she begged me, somewhat peremptorily, to reconsider my former objections and to be guided by her son's wishes.

"I would have married Guy gladly, but there was my

promise. Humphrey had been more a father than a brother to me, and I was bound to respect his wishes. A few months' delay would have hurt neither of us; and Guy knew that Humphrey had just lost his betrothed. It was so unlike Guy's usual unselfishness to wish it, that I am sure some secret pressure had been put on him. Afterwards I heard that people were coupling mine and Mr. Mordaunt's name together in an injurious way, and Mr. Mordaunt could not be induced to contradict it. There had been a fierce quarrel between the two, and Sydney Mordaunt had defied him.

"Guy was too generous to repeat these tales; but he wanted me to marry him and put a stop to them all. But there was my promise. Oh, Dym, those were weary days! They called me cold and unyielding, and said I could not love him. No one spoke a kind word for me. But indeed he did not treat me well. The fierce ungovernable temper rose at every provocation, and Beatrix knew how to fan the flame. Humphrey was too stupefied with his own grief to see how I was harassed. There were stormy scenes, reproaches, entreaties that were worse than wrath; and one night, when the anger in Guy's eyes was something terrible, when he looked as Heriot Chichester might have looked when he thought Marjory had been false—that night they had made him believe that I had ceased to love him.

"The next day I gave him back his troth. He had said words to me that I could bear from no man. I had done nothing that he should distrust me. I loved him still, but I would rather have died than married him. It had come upon me with a terror of anguish that such wills as ours would never blend; and so I made up my mind never to be Guy Chichester's wife."

"Oh, Honor, were you afraid of him?"

"I was, and I was not. I think I should have been like Marjory. But he must have killed me before he broke my will. Ah, how I wish for his sake I had been different! A gentler woman would have hindered his mad fits coming on him. Look here." And Honor lifted up her sleeve and showed a faint scar on her white arm, just above the elbow. "That was done when I turned to leave him; and he held me fast. See how the facets of the ring have cut into the flesh. I saw him turn pale when the blood started."

"They tell me Guy was literally a madman after that. For a time he left home. He must have traveled nearly over the world; for I heard of him being in America, India, and afterwards in Egypt, and for two years we did not meet. Humphrey had commenced farming on his own account; and shortly after these sad events we settled down in Nidderdale Cottage. Aunt Dorothy had left me her little fortune, and we were fairly rich.

"I need not tell you what those years were to me. Those who have loved and suffered can imagine what I went through. One evening, as I was sitting alone, looking out on the sunshine and lilies, a shadow passed the window, and Guy, thin, brown, and bearded, stood before me.

"Do you know what he came for? To ask me to forgive him. As though I had not forgiven and blessed him every night of my life! But when he asked me to marry him, again I would not. How could I, when I could not trust him? And yet," and here Honor pushed the hair from her face, and went on hurriedly, "three times since then he has come to me with the same pleading question on his lips, the same look of love in his eyes, and three times I have said him nay. But he never reproaches me now: instead of that, year by year I have seen the stern mastery over his passions; year by year he grows more self-controlled and less reckless. Now you know the secret of his noble work at St. Luke's, and how he cools the fierce blood in his veins by sleepless nights and self-denying labors among the sick and dying. There is a singular friendship between us. When the angry moods are on him, they say nothing but my influence can soothe and restrain him. Even Mrs. Chichester owns it, and sends for me in all her troubles. Once with tears she prayed me to come to her and be her daughter. To do her justice, I believe she repents of her former unkindness. Humphrey pleads for him too. He tells me Guy has made a vow to win me yet. Dym," stroking her hair, "are you not sorry for me?"

"I am more sorry for him. Oh, Honor, surely, surely you must trust him now!"

Honor's answer was low and emphatic: "I suppose I do, for," leaning over and kissing her softly, "I mean to be his wife."

"Honor, why have you told me this?"

There had been a brief interval of silence, only broken by the slow dropping of the pine-knots on the hearth. The creeping shadows on the ceiling widened and spread into grotesque shapes; the ragged edges of the poplars still swayed and flickered on the blinds. Outside, the soughing and creaking of the boughs still blended at intervals with the dull roll of the rising wind; the moon was watery, and shone with dim unequal light. Inside, the soft variable firelight played on the two faces—one downcast, troubled, moved by strange yearnings, woke into sudden pain; the other agitated by a joy that found its only safety in silence.

"Honor, why have you told me this?" The question seemed to break involuntarily from Dym. She had listened to Honor's narrative with hidden face and compressed lips. Now and then a low interjection of surprise—a word or two, keynote to an intense sympathy—gave evidence that the listener had not grown weary; but, now that the story was finished, it was wonderful how little Dym found to say. Only the tightening of her arms round Honor's neck, and the heavy droop of her cheek on Honor's breast, were eloquent enough.

"Why have I told you? Indeed, I hardly know: confidence is easily shared with one we love. Are those tears in your eyes, Dym?"

"Never mind them; bend down your head, Honor. Lower! lower yet!"

And, as Honor's calm beauty seemed to lean over and envelop her, "I kiss this dear face, which I have grown to love, oh, so dearly. I bid God bless it! Oh, Honor darling! may you be happy! may you be very, very happy!" And Dym cast herself into her arms in a fit of bitter weeping.

"Hush, love! Nay, we must be calm! We have neither of us strength to spare for tears. Are you sorry for my happiness, then?"

"Sorry! oh, no!—glad, only glad."

"You must not cry, then," replied Honor, hushing her with sweet peremptoriness. "Dym, you will not lose your friend."

With womanly instinct she had touched the sore place; and, though Dym winced, her tears flowed less painfully.

"You are Guy's *protégée*. He is such a faithful friend, you will never be less to him because"—here Honor's firm

tones faltered a little—"because I am giving him back his happiness."

Had she guessed Dym's innocent secret—the pure girl-worship that had elevated Guy Chichester into an ideal, a hero invested by her imagination with all a hero's nobility? Had she given Dym this touching mark of her confidence because those wise woman's eyes had read something of which Dym herself was ignorant?

Dym could make nothing of the dull nameless pain that had lain so heavy on her heart as Honor talked. Unknown pangs, an odd doubt and dread, seemed to seize her, as she listened. Guileless and unsuspecting by nature, singularly childish in matters on which girlhood is often prematurely wise, Dym had never shrunk from openly avowing her intense reverence and loyalty to Guy Chichester.

It was this childish frankness that had roused honest Humphrey's surprise. In his old-fashioned creed, Dym's lack of reticence, her innocent admiration, her one-sided enthusiasm, had first baffled and then interested him. He could not understand it. By and by he indulged in clumsy jokes about Dym's hero. Dym took them in excellent part. She rather enjoyed them than otherwise; and so Humphrey learned to think lightly of the whole thing: and her staunch allegiance to her benefactor was only an added beauty in his eyes.

But Honor, who had long read her brother's secret, doubted and sighed.

It was only hero-worship—the purest love of which a girl's nature is capable. But it had this one danger. Guy's fascination would blind Dym to lesser lights: other men would fall short of such a standard. Dym's humility and childishness kept her safe, it was true, from the danger of unrequited love; but was it likely that she would ever be induced to listen to Humphrey's homely suit—that she could be satisfied with a nature that could give her plenty of honest manly love, but which could afford no scope for her imagination?

"She will never love Humphrey," Honor often said, sorrowfully, to herself.

And once, "She loves Guy Chichester; but it is the love of a child rather than a woman."

Perhaps Honor had come very near the secret sting of Dym's pain. She was not sorry for Honor's happiness—nay,

she rejoiced in it—but the thought of losing her friend was dreadful to her. His presence had grown to be as essential to her as the sunshine to her health. His words, his smiles, were meat and drink to her. When she was drooping, his energy revived her; his quaint wisdom, his odd philosophy, seemed to brace her morally, as a pure moorland breeze would have done physically. Insensibly she adopted his opinions, looked at things as he looked at them, and steered herself by his compass.

As she remained silent, her mind stretched itself back to embrace the few months during which she had known him. A few months, barely a year, and yet how it had changed her whole life!

Once Will was everything to her. Now had Will become only the second?

She remembered their first meeting. The tall bearded stranger, that seemed to block up the narrow school-room; the vigorous voice and laugh; the keen quizzical eyes, that even that first evening seemed to gauge the depths of her childish intellect; the frank chivalry that prompted him to take up cudgels in defense of a poor friendless governess.

She had liked him even then, when he was only "Cousin Guy," Edith's kind friend and guardian.

But he was Will's hero too—the veritable Mr. Latimer, the Great Unknown, whose eccentric virtues they had often discussed.

Dym thought of those happy evenings in Paradise Row. How kindly, how gently he had ever borne himself! How he had planned and arranged for her comfort, comporting himself towards her more like some grave elder brother! Even as the master of Ingleside there had been nothing haughty and wounding in his treatment of her. He had been brusque, but even in his brusquerie there had been something genial. He had dictated—people said Guy Chichester could be masterful and peremptory at times—but with one sad exception Dym had learned to obey. Was it not reward enough to win one of those bright pleasant smiles? She had never seen him since the night when he had folded her in his plaid and carried her over those bleak wintry fields. His last act had been one of mute reproach, when he had nearly broken her heart by refusing to accept a trifling service

at her hand. Now on that night, when she had pushed him from her in half-delirious agony, he had gathered her to him with gentle words, and borne her swiftly in his strong arms through the cold and darkness. Her hero! her master! her friend! No, there was only one woman worthy of him—the woman whose fair face was bending over her now so anxiously. Dym's sorrowful humility had no envy in it. She let Honor soothe her with soft words and plentiful caresses: only, when she had left her, she put up her hands to her face, and cried out to herself, only very softly, lest any should hear, that she had lost her friend, and prayed that God would bless them and take care of her.

That sense of loss is a terrible one to a woman—to centre one's interest, one's love or friendship, on one object—an object perhaps worthy of our deepest reverence—and then to see it gather some new affection into its life and leave us outside in the cold. They are the same to us, they say; we have not lost our friend; our place by the hearth is the same. True; but the fire is not burning brightly for us: its warmest light and heat are given to another.

Good heavens! the unrequited, unsatisfied hunger and thirst of many a woman's nature—fountains that might water the desert with their sweetness—left arid and dry, their springs clogged up; no marvel if the empty channels are stony enough sometimes. Lives must be lived; affection will not always be choked: a warm loving heart must find vent for itself. "If he ask bread, shall he give him a stone?" Oh, these mighty mysteries, these unsolved questions—are there no answers in the infinite? Yea, peace; "it needs be." These are the hearts that embrace a whole world; these are the sympathies that grasp the unloved little ones, the fallen, the lonely, the miserable, and strain them to warm, throbbing bosoms.

"*There are who sigh that no fond heart is theirs: None loves them best.*"

Perhaps there are those who recall how the great Christian poet of our century touched gently on this sore unhealed place of many a lonely life, and the marvelous answer—too sacred to be written here—which he has recorded for their comfort. Still, with all reverence, there are other and practical solutions to these social enigmas. We talk of wasted, disappointed lives, of blighted affections, of the loneliness of an unmarried

woman's home; and in doing so we overlook manifold blessings, wondrous opportunities, and, perchance, the end and object of it all. As a woman writer of the present day very sweetly and sensibly says, "When there really seems to be so much kindness and gentle-heartedness, one is the more impatient of a certain melancholy, desponding spirit which seems to prevail so often. . . . What possible reason can there be to prevent unmarried, any more than married, people from being happy or unhappy, according to their circumstances—from enjoying other pleasures more lively than the griefs and sufferings of their neighbors? Are unmarried people shut out from all theatres, concerts, picture-galleries, parks, and gardens? May they not walk out every day of the week? Are they locked up all the summer-time, and only let out when an east wind is blowing?"*

We claim for our unmarried women the foremost place in the noble ranks of the workers. Who fill our religious communities, our sisterhoods, our hospital wards? Who are our sunniest writers? Who carry on noble labors for the poor fallen of our sex? The world may spare a pity that degrades and wounds; sentimentalism may cease; useless regrets and foolish sophisms, the eccentric genius, self-directed and misguided, may leave off blazoning the empty sounds of woman's rights and woman's wrongs. The real woman, ennobled by work, and merging her identity in others, has found her right place, and can live out a glorious life, though it be not sweetened by mere earthly love. To forget herself, to live in others' lives, to love with an unselfishness that demands little in return, to have real palpable work, and to do it with one's whole heart and brain, and to look forward to the "rest that remaineth"—this is all that is needed to make the life of even the despised old maid "something akin to the angels."

Nor let it be said, in thus proudly advocating the cause of the single, who have certainly their own burdens to bear, that we slur over the simple kindly virtues of those more fortunate sisters who have found a strong arm to lean on. Methinks their temptation must be greater whose happiness is so rounded and perfected that they sometimes see heaven mirrored on earth, and so lose the things that are invisible.

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* Miss Thackeray's "Toilers and Spinsters."

In the eyes of many there might appear something overstrained and exaggerated in Dym's affection for Guy Chichester. The world is given to look coldly on these sorts of platonic friendship; and in the main I am inclined to think the world may be right. Very rarely we may find a safe exception.

Dym's pure childlike nature found its safeguard in ignorance. At present it was merely hero-worship, and the grateful love of the benefited to the benefactor. Had Guy Chichester been old and gray-bearded, Dym would have had the same admiring tenderness, only it would have been more openly avowed. Dym's sorrow when she read the ending to Honor's story was merely caused by the instinctive dread of losing her friend: some instinct warned her that such a change must influence her own life. In their perfect happiness they would not need her. Honor would take her place: her work at Ingleside would be over.

"Out in the cold indeed!" Poor little, fluttering, childish heart growing womanly out of very pain, tasting for the first time the bitter-sweet of life!

Dym's troubled thoughts were carrying her into weary speculations about the future, when a quick tap at the door recalled her to the present. It could only be Humphrey, who had been of late a frequent visitor; certainly Dym's low-voiced "Come in" had no welcoming sound in it.

"That sounded dubious. Are you sure I may come in?"

Dym's heart gave a sudden bound. How many weeks had it been since she had heard that kindly voice! The ruddy flame leaped up among the scattered logs as Guy Chichester's broad shoulders blocked up the doorway, and his keen inquisitive glance scanned sofa and window-seat as though in search of some one; then he paused, and put his hand to his beard with the old movement of dissatisfied impatience. "Are you alone? I thought—Where is Miss Nethecote?"

Dym had stretched out her hands with an involuntary cry of surprise and pleasure; now they dropped to her side, and her lip quivered like a child. She had not seen him since that night, and yet he had no welcome for her; he had saved her from the cold and darkness only for this!

This was Dym's first unreasoning thought. Her second was to cry shame on her selfishness; surely the first welcome should be Honor's.

"She was here just now; she will come back directly. Will you ring? Shall I send for her?" Dym's quavering voice had not a note of strength in it: it silenced Guy Chichester's impatience directly.

"By no means. I can wait; only she sent for me. Ah, my child, how you have suffered!" And, moved to sudden compassion by the sight of the sweet pale face, Mr. Chichester stooped over her couch and lifted the little hand to his lips.

The grave caress was too much for Dym; her color fluttered dangerously, and the large dark eyes brimmed over with tears.

"Dear child, I have been so sorry for you; but you are better now?"

"Much better;" and then, under her breath, "Oh, I am so glad to see you again, Mr. Chichester."

The frank kindness of his look said he was glad too.

"I have missed my little friend," sitting down by her, and glancing pitifully at the wasted hands and sunken cheeks: "you must make haste and come back to us; my mother has been quite lost without you."

"Your mother—oh, she has been so good to me!"

"Ingleside is not the same place to her without you. How have you managed to creep so far into her heart?"

"I don't know," smiling faintly. "Did you say you had missed me, Mr. Chichester?"

"Of course"—with his old mischievous look; "I have no one to contradict me now." But he repented of his jest when he saw Dym cover her face with her thin hands. "My dear child—nay, I was only jesting. No, I will not have this," taking down her hands authoritatively. Then, as he read traces of real agitation in the white trembling lip, "Miss Elliott, my poor girl, why, what is this?"

"Oh, Mr. Chichester, if you would only tell me you have forgiven me!" Dym's two hands went out imploringly to him. In spite of her trouble, she looked such a child, with her long wavy hair floating on the pillow, that he could not refrain from an exclamation of pity. So young and weak, how could he have found it in his heart to have been so stern with her?

"If you will let me hear you say so once, I think I could be almost happy."

"Hush!" was all his answer; "you are hurting me."

"Again?" her voice breaking almost into a sob. "Can I do nothing to atone for my fault, then?"

"You have atoned for it over and over again. I will not have you bring up these old troubles."

"I cannot help it. Has not my imprudence nearly cost Honor's life?"

Mr. Chichester shuddered. "True," he muttered; then, as he raised his eyes and saw Dym's wistful look, he generously hastened to comfort her. "Will it make you happier to hear it? Well, then, I forgive you freely. Are you satisfied now?"

"But if she had died!" Dym half whispered to herself; and again that quick shudder passed over him.

"If she had," catching his breath, then speaking calmly—"if she had, I should still have forgiven you."

"Oh, Mr. Chichester!"

"I should have been to blame as well as you." Then, breaking into one of his sunny smiles, "But we will not imagine such dreadful things; Honor is safe, and you are better, and God has been very good to us." But the mention of her name brought back the old impatience: he rose from his seat and began pacing the room.

"Do you know what has become of her? I shall lose my train, and I think she wishes to speak to me." And his hand rested furtively where Honor's little penciled note was hidden.

"If you go down, I will send her to you." And Guy, who needed no other bidding, came up to her couch again to bid her good-by.

"I shall not see you again, I suppose; good-night, rest well." But Dym's wistful hand detained him.

"We are friends again, Mr. Chichester?"

"Ay, surely. Why not?"

"Sick people have curious whims sometimes. I wish you would call me that again."

"What, my little friend?"

"I like that too; but there is a name you use sometimes." And, strange to say, he understood her.

"Silly child," he said, with an indulgent smile. "You are getting spoiled among us. There, good-night, my child, good-night. Why do you look so grave?"

"I was only thinking of our motto, you remember, *Qui patitur vincit:* it comes true always. Good-night, God bless you, Mr. Chichester!"

Did he understand her?

"He is come," was all she said to Honor, whom she found sitting alone in the moonlight. Honor bent her head in response, and a moment afterwards noiselessly left the room.

CHAPTER XX.

CROWNED.

GUY CHICHESTER was alone.

Honor's pretty sitting-room had a pleasant homelike air about it this evening: the soft lamp-light fell on the gray damask and delicately stenciled walls, Kiddle-a-wink was stretched on the white rug, a work-basket stood open on Honor's little table, and some lacework lay where it had been thrown down weeks ago; a riding-whip and gauntlet were beside it. A look of pain crossed Guy Chichester's face as he noted these little tokens of Honor's presence, and then he threw his arms across the back of the low velvet lounging-chair, and buried his face on them.

Heaven knows what bitter thoughts were surging up in the man's mind as his head sank despondingly on his folded arms. Regret for the past mingling with fears for the future; intolerable longings, remorse for a wasted life, for talents frittered away, for opportunities lost, for faults that had blasted so fair a promise, blended with rebellion against Fate, that had robbed him of his heart's desire.

"I nearly lost her," was his inward groan. "She was right; and what good would my life have been to me—what good is it now? I am weary of this struggle; of what avail is my manhood? I cannot bear this state of things much longer; it is maddening." The broad shoulders heaved with the impatient sigh. "Fool!" he went on, "weak, unmanly, to think I can hardly master myself in her presence. One

of these days I must rise against this soft tyranny; one of these days I must tell her that she must be my wife or nothing to me. Nothing! As though I could blot her out of my life—as though I could endure existence without her! Friendship! the very thought is oppressive—a mere mockery. Oh, Honor, I may have sinned, but at least you will have to answer for these wasted embittered years." A stifled sigh seemed to echo the unspoken reproach—a soft sweep of drapery came nearer and nearer.

"Guy!" It scarcely needed that whispered monosyllable to bring Guy Chichester back to the present again, for the hand whose touch had always thrilled through his man's pulses was lying lightly on his arm; but the brown bearded face was only lifted for a moment. She could feel the electric shock that ran through him.

"Oh, Honor, Honor!"

She kept her steady hand on his arm, but her voice shook in its sweetness.

"Dear Guy, look again; it is your old Honor."

"But so changed, so pitiably changed! Honor, the girl was right: I might have lost you."

"True, dear friend."

He raised his head, and drew her towards him with a fond peremptory movement, but for once there was no resistance. She stood with her head a little drooping and eyes downcast, as his keen glance noted the ravages that disease had made in her beautiful face and figure: evidently he was unprepared for the change, for he relaxed his hold with a sudden groan.

Her clear wistful eyes questioned him, and then a fear seized her; she grew paler, and pressed her hand to her side. "Guy, you frighten me. Am I such a wreck?" For the poor soul feared that her beauty had faded. What if sickness had robbed her of her charms, and she no longer found favor in his eyes?

But in his pain he misunderstood her.

"It would not have been fair. Death had no right to deprive me of my treasure before it had come into my keeping," he said, almost savagely. The old Berserker spirit kindled in his eye; the man seemed defying his fate.

"I wanted to live. Oh, it seemed too dreadful to die!" she murmured, pressing nearer to him. Another time she would have rebuked his bitterness; now her weakness and her

need of him were so great that she could not refrain from a pang that he did not open his arms and take her into them who had been given to him back from death; as though in his reverence he would have touched a hair of her head unless she had suffered him!

Had he forgotten that only a little while ago he had prayed her to have mercy upon him, for that his trouble was greater than he could bear, and she had said him nay? How could he know that during these long years she had proved him, and that she was willing—ay, ready—to trust him now? Already the sullen gloom on his brow was infecting her with a new terror. Was she so changed—pitiably changed, as he said? Was it this that was clouding his thankfulness and making him so unlike himself? Honor's limbs trembled; her woman's nature had received a shock; the light died out of the beautiful eyes.

"Guy, I cannot bear this. What makes you so strange to me?"

He drew his hand before his eyes, and then his voice changed; he answered her with feigned cheerfulness.

"To be sure, I have no right to be making you as dreary as myself. I ought to be thankful, I am thankful, that you are spared, though it may not be for me; but one grows so heart-sick sometimes. But you cannot help that, can you, dear?"

"Guy, how can you misunderstand me so!"

"Am I misunderstanding you, my poor Honor? How pale you look, and I am keeping you standing! Sit down, dear."

"Not now." Yet Honor's limbs could hardly support their weight; she leaned heavily against the chair, steadying herself with hands that had begun to tremble. Why did he not look at her?—yet his voice was kind.

"You sent for me," speaking hurriedly, as though he had suddenly remembered something; "you must not make me lose my train."

"Oh, Guy, must you go, and to-night?"

"Elliott says there is no need——"

"Then stay," interrupted Honor.

"Stay—why?" he repeated, looking at her in surprise. "You are the last person, are you not, to tell me to neglect my duty?"

"Your duty!—ah, yes. But may it not be here?" But again he misunderstood her.

"You are a good woman, Honor, you mean it for the best, but this must cease. Hush!" as she tried to interpose a word; "I did not mean to tell you this to-night—not to-night."

"What is it you have to tell me, Guy?" and Honor's voice grew faint. He was trying her cruelly, but she had no strength with which to answer him.

"I have been thinking it over—No, there is no time to-night, you are not well enough, and it seems ungrateful after you have been brought back from death. You do not think me unkind, do you, Honor?"

"No, Guy;" but there was a ring of despair in her voice.

"You are so true a friend—you mean so well by me; but once for all you must understand that a man's nature is not always under his control. This friendship between us is mockery. I—What ails you, dear?"

"Oh, Guy, my heart is breaking! Guy! Guy!"

At the cry of anguish from the woman he loved, Guy Chichester turned pale, and involuntarily opened his arms, but the next moment they dropped to his side.

"I forgot; I have no right," he muttered.

Honor tottered back into a seat and covered her face with her hands; and tears, the bitterest she had ever shed, dropped slowly through her wasted fingers. Had she come back to him through the valley of the shadow of death for this?

But the next moment he sprang to her side.

"Anything but that," he cried, in a voice hoarse with emotion. "Honor, it shall be as you wish. I would rather die than you should shed a single tear. Keep me by you if you will; when it grows too hard I will go away, as I have gone away before. Oh, my darling, my darling! I never meant to hurt you like this."

She looked up in his face and smiled—how sadly!—through her tears. "Oh, Guy, am I that still?"

"Are you what, my darling? God help me, Honor, but I think you grow dearer to me every day I live. Ever since the first hour I saw you, you have been the only woman in the world to me—my heaviest curse and my dearest blessing."

"And you love me still?"

With quick revulsion he left her side and began pacing the room.

"Have I deserved this doubt? I thought you perfect, Honor; but you have no right to test your power like this;" and then, as though afraid of his vehemence, "Do you remember how you clung to me that night? I could see your hands waving out to me in the darkness ever so far away. Will you ever cling to me again?" He stopped, and looked at the fair bowed face with intense yearning, and his voice grew low and passionate. "Oh, Honor, if it be for the last time, for the sake of the dear old days, kiss me once again, and bid God bless me before I go; for to-night I feel like a Cain branded with the thought of some lost paradise."

Under the sheltering hands the pale face grew radiant. What were the words that seemed echoing down deep in her heart? "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."

"Guy, come here." And as he leaned over her she lifted up her face, flushed with brilliant color, and kissed him, and then laid her head on his breast.

"God bless you, dear! Oh, my dear, my dear, you have nearly broken my heart; but I understand it now. You must never leave me again, Guy, for," in a whisper, "I cannot do without you."

Crowned indeed! Had it come to him at last?—the prize he had won and lost, and which he had been striving to regain all these weary years. Was the seed he had sown in bitterness to bring forth a fair harvest?

"My God, I am not worthy," were the only words that came to him in that moment of culminating joy, when the woman he had wooed for so many years came to him and laid her noble head on his breast, and he could feel the beating of the pure heart against his own.

"My love! my love!" was all he said; but the tightening of the strong arms about her, the murmured blessing from the lips that rested upon the bright hair, spoke volumes, and, holding her to him in that long silent embrace, Guy Chichester thanked God and took courage.

"Honor, are you sure you trust me now?"

They were sitting together side by side. Honor looked a

little spent and weary with happiness, but the tender shining of her eyes and the varying color on her face made her so like the "Honor bright" of the old days, that Guy Chichester could almost have thought that the long bitterness was a dream, and that they had never been parted.

"It was in this room, do you remember, Honor, that you gave me back this?" and he opened a little case and showed her the diamond hoop. "I have carried it about with me ever since. I hardly dared to hope its owner would wear it again."

She looked at him with her old beautiful smile, but it deepened into gravity as the diamonds slipped into their old place, and Guy took hand and ring into his keeping.

"Six years ago, in this dear old room, you promised to be my wife. We have gone through a good deal since then. You will not keep me long waiting, will you, dear?"

"No, Guy."

"You will soon come to me?"

"Whenever you wish it," was the quiet answer.

There was something almost solemn in this second betrothal. Guy Chichester was the first to break the silence.

"And you can really trust me now?"

"Fully and entirely. I see now that I was wrong to doubt you, Guy. I believe, after all, that we were both to blame."

"For what, love?"

"For all these wasted unhappy years, when we might have been together. No, don't stop me, dear. If you only knew how I have longed to ask your forgiveness!"

"Mine? You must be jesting, Honor."

She smiled and shook her head.

"No; I have been wrong too. I have been harsh and ungenerous. Your mother was right when she said I loved my own will too much to make you happy; and yet no woman was ever prouder of her lover than I was of you, Guy."

"You were always too good to me. I will not have you reproach yourself like this. But for my cursed temper, you would have been my wife long ago."

She sighed, and he could feel the hand he held tremble slightly.

"Do you know the thought that haunted me most in my illness? It was remorse that I had not loved you well enough.

Yes, indeed," as Guy uttered an incredulous exclamation. "'perfect love casteth out fear.' My love was imperfect while I feared to trust you."

"You knew me too well; it was all my fault, all my fault."

"You say that to comfort me, but indeed I was hard on myself as well as you. Do you remember that day when I interceded for Stewart? I was nearly yielding then."

"Nearly, but not quite."

"No; the old fear still remained. I had heard all about your noble work then, Guy; and when you prayed me to come to you, such a longing constrained me that I could have cast myself into your arms, if you had only been less stern with me. When I thought that I should die, and that you would never know how I loved you, I felt as though my heart were breaking."

"Hush, dear! you must not grow pale over these memories. How could you fear me, when you knew I worshiped the ground you walked upon?"

"Ah, it is all over and gone! Now I shall never doubt you again—never, Guy." Then, looking at him with all her soul in her eyes, "You must not do all the worship."

"Why not?" stooping over her and kissing the broad white forehead.

"You must leave a little of that to me."

Guy Chichester did not go to London that night. Just before midnight he and Kelpie made their appearance in the library at Ingleside, startling William Elliott from a fireside meditation.

The clergyman dropped his hand wearily from his forehead as Kelpie rushed in with his rousing bark and began describing circles on the rug. Guy thrust his hands in his pockets and whistled nonchalantly as he took his usual lounging attitude against the mantelpiece. Will's look of astonishment baffled description.

"What! you have not gone, after all? or has the train broken down?"

"Not to my knowledge. A man is allowed to change his mind, I suppose. Latimer's cubs may take care of themselves. My days at St. Luke's are over."

Will stared at him. Then he put on his spectacles and

regarded him fixedly for a minute, took them off again, and said, "Oh!"

Guy Chichester stroked his beard with a conscious air.

"I have not hurt your feelings, have I, Elliott?"

"Not at all."

"It is not good to be neglectful of one's own parish."

"True."

"Kentish Town may be a stronghold of the Philistines, but there may be heathens very near one's hearth. My head gardener Crouch has a strong savor of Calvinistic doctrine about him. He told me the other day that he knew he was predestined to eternal torment. I ought to have it out with him. Charity begins at home, eh?"

"I don't know. I think it too often stops there," growled Will, who for once chose to be in a perverse humor.

"You parsons can be aggravating enough sometimes. Why cannot you be more tender over a returning prodigal? It is better by far to talk to old Humphrey; he would not hedge up a man's good resolutions in the way you are doing."

"Humph! it is never too late to mend. So you are going to reform, are you, squire? Have you found a cure for your restlessness?"

"I have a great mind to keep my own counsel, to punish you for your irony."

"Why do you disappoint a man's expectations, then? I thought you were going to be a second Mungo Park, or Captain Cook at least; that you would discover some inaccessible mountain or navigate some untraversable lake. Who quenches the godlike spirit of enterprise within you? Ha, ha! Prometheus chained! Guy Chichester buried in the Happy Valley!"

Mr. Chichester smiled grimly.

"By the fates, you try my patience too far. Is that all your priestcraft can do for a repentant sinner—terrify him with a nightmare of vultures? To the winds with such sorry prophecies! I have a whole Arcadia framed and glazed in my mind's eye."

"Pipe on, then, to a chorus of Phyllises and Corydons," muttered Will, drowsily.

But Guy Chichester was too much in earnest to heed his satire.

"I have asked too much of life. After all, a man has only to limit his desires to reap content. I don't think that my notions are Utopian, after all."

"That depends on common sense being one of the ingredients," was the somewhat uncivil answer. But Mr. Chichester went on, undaunted by the sarcasm.

"If we were all to add up our sins, I suppose the sum-total would scare a few of us. Don't you think our sins of omission would swell the balance awfully?"

"Where are you drifting now? Rather a wide margin, from Pan's pipes to original sin."

"I am only repeating my *Miserere*. I do not think I ever realized before my responsibility as a landed proprietor. I must tell you seriously what I think of doing. I shall settle down in earnest; take Humphrey's advice, work the home farm; build that batch of cottages he is always worrying me to begin; inclose more of the common-land; and see if I can make half as good a landlord and country gentleman as my father did."

"Amen, and all honor to Miss Nethecote."

Guy started and turned red.

"Who told you? I mean, how did you guess it?"

"Do you think it needed any telling when one could look at your face? There, let us cease this fencing. I congratulate you with my whole heart." And as Will held out his hand Guy Chichester caught it and wrung it fervently.

"You are a good fellow, Elliott. God bless you! She has told me all about it, and how you stood my friend; and I am happier than I have ever been in my life. And, Elliott, is she not an angel?"

"She is what is better still, a pure loving woman. Will you take it amiss if I say a word to you?"

"Of course not."

"Heaven is granting you a treasure. You have lost it once; be careful how you guard it for the future."

"You have every right to say this to me," returned Guy, impatiently; "but do you think such advice is needful? I have suffered too much to peril my happiness again."

"He that thinketh he standeth," repeated Will, solemnly. "Forgive me if I seem to be preaching; but I do not believe that any earthly motive—any affection, however strong—can

avail us in an hour of temptation. Sometimes when I look at you I tremble, for you seem to stand alone."

"My good angel will always be near me," replied Guy Chichester, softly.

"They are always near us," returned Will, with a sigh, "mine as well as yours; and yet we have our falls sometimes. When our hands are down, the Amalekites prevail; when we least expect it, our Philistines are upon us."

"I am not worthy of her; I feel that."

"She would love you if you were ten times as unworthy. I only want you to prove your armor. You see, I am claiming my rights of friendship in speaking so openly. Well, and so your days at St. Luke's are over?"

"Yes, thank Heaven; but I hope to be a good friend to it still. What do you think Honor says? That some day I must take her to see all our old haunts."

"It is like her goodness. Yes; I hope you will both come."

"I shall bring my wife to see you. Oh, Elliott, does it not seem strange to think the old lonely life is passed away like some bad dream—the restlessness and fever gone, and love, work, reality, replacing it? Honor has such a large heart: if I let her, she will be the good lady of St. Luke's as well as of our village."

"You must not leave us entirely; I can ill spare you," returned Will, with some emotion. "I love to think of those old days when you came over and helped us."

"Poor Elliott! I always said the work was too hard for you. Your sister little knew you were on the brink of illness when I fetched you away. But these two months' rest will set you up, eh?"

"Yes, I am getting well and hearty again; but I doubt if this idleness agrees with me. I feel restless out of the traces."

"Nonsense! By the by, Elliott, I have something to ask you. What is your opinion of Latimer?"

"Of your cousin, do you mean?"

"Ay, the marble priest, as that little piece of wickedness calls him. How do you and he pull together?"

"Fairly well. I think you all underrate him."

"Ah, you think he has a conscience under that stiff mask of his?"

"A very sensitive one."

"Well, Lat's a good fellow, if Kate were not too much for him. You are better off without a helpmeet."

Will winced. His friend's words touched a sore place. In his younger days he had had pleasant visions of a happy home and wife and children, before poverty and his infirmities had debarred him of this hope. His was a nature keenly alive to the pain of loneliness and want of sympathy, though few guessed what the renunciation had cost him. Silent and many were the victories that his quiet endurance won. Stern only with himself, he was uniformly gentle with others; and he had learned not only to sympathize with the sad and suffering, but, what was far harder, to rejoice in their joy.

For one moment something like bitterness crossed his mind as he contrasted himself with his friend: the one reveling in health, strength, full of vigor, rich in intellect, laden with the good things of this world, blessed with the possession of a loving heart; the other, young, yet strangely conversant with pain, bound by infirmity, an object of pity even to those who reverenced him, his great intellect earning for him the merest pittance, his hearth cold and lonely, no woman's face within his home, no child to come creeping about his knees.

But, as though he felt the cold touch of some demon, he shook off his sadness with gentle sarcasm.

"You are wrong. I have a grimmer helpmeet than your cousin. Long years ago I wooed her, and she came to me. She keeps my hearth clean, but not warm: her embraces are as chaste as snow and as cold as ice."

Mr. Chichester made a grimace.

"If I read your riddle aright, Elliott, I should sue for a divorce."

"For shame! I will not have you deride my mistress. You only see her homely features; she keeps all her beauties for me. No, I have honestly won her, and shall keep her till death."

"Mark my words! In a few months you will change her for a richer bride."

"Rank heresy! What! abjure poverty?"

"Moderate wealth would add to your means of doing good."

"I prefer my present stewardship. What can be nobler work than the cure of souls?"

"Pooh! there are souls as valuable to be saved up here. Did I not tell you about my gardener Crouch? Would you have the poor man spend his life in terror of eternal perdition? He has worsted Latimer in an argument already."

"My dear Chichester, what have I to do with Mr. Fortescue, or Crouch either?"

"You may have plenty to do with both, if you will. You have given me advice, and I shall take the liberty of repaying it with interest. There are stronger men needed at St. Luke's."

"Granted; but where could you find one more willing? St. Luke's is my life."

"Lythe is the very man for it."

"My work is as necessary to me as your love is to you."

"An ill-matched comparison! I say Lythe is the man."

Will was silent.

"My dear fellow, I have arranged it all with Latimer. He has his faults, I allow: he is confoundedly proud, but he is a very jewel of a vicar. He will leave you to all your vagaries." And, as Will looked mystified, he repeated, "I tell you, I have settled it all with him."

"I am quite as much in the dark as ever."

Mr. Chichester gave one of his hearty laughs.

"To be sure. I have never explained myself. Well, I don't know whether it is Kate's fancies, or whether Latimer is really delicate on the chest—anyhow, my mother, Grey, and Kate have imagined it between them, and Latimer is to spend the next two or three winters at Mentone. Some one has offered him a chaplaincy there."

"I really think he is delicate."

"I suspect it is a bit of over-caution—a bit of remorse on my lady's part for nearly worrying him into an early grave; or most likely she finds the vicarage dull as well as damp in the winter: these dark-eyed women are so artful."

"You are too hard on Mrs. Fortescue. I think her a charming person."

"My dear fellow, your charity is so universal that I believe you would extend it to Medusa herself. You would ask her so prettily to avert her death-darting glances, that her Gorgon soul would be charmed. If there is anything I detest, it is charity."

Will smiled resignedly.

"Charitable people are so slow. If everybody were to agree with you, the world would not be worth living in. Depend upon it, Adam and Eve were dreadfully tired of each other before Eve conceived the brilliant idea of eating the apple."

"Do you know you would shock any one who did not know you as well as I do?"

"Kate's name always rankles. I believe I hate that woman; she is sheer humbug, and Lat believes in her. So you like my lady, eh?"

"She has been very good-natured to me. Dym rather dislikes her, I believe."

"Bravo, Miss Dym! Well, Latimer being off duty half the year, it is quite indispensable to have a good resident curate, who can take charge of the parish in the vicar's absence. The work is light, the pay good as such things go—two hundred and fifty—and lodgings found, I believe Latimer said."

"Indeed! Is it usual in these northern parishes for the squire to add another hundred to the curate's stipend?"

Mr. Chichester looked disconcerted.

"A hundred and fifty being nearer the mark."

"What makes you so sharp to-night? I suppose I may do as I like in my own parish?"

"Indeed! Are you the lay-rector?"

"No, I am not, Mr. Elliott; but Birstwith belongs to me, and I do not choose the curate of my church, which my father built, to be paid less well than my butler or head gardener."

"I think you are right," returned Will, sadly, hanging his head.

"If you will undertake this charge, the two hundred and fifty a year will be yours; if you refuse, it will go to another man."

"I trust you will find one to your liking," replied Will, gently.

"What! you decline?"

"I fear I must do so."

"You call me your friend, and refuse the first favor I have ever asked you! Do you know I have set my heart upon this?"

"It grieves me to be obliged to disappoint you, but I cannot leave St. Luke's."

"Tut, man! your reasons?"

"I have given them."

"None that I recognize as such. Do be reasonable, Elliott, and look at this in a sober matter-of-fact way. Does not common sense tell you you are not the man for a dense overpopulated parish like that?"

"I am not much to look at, certainly," returned Will, with a faint smile; "but I am young to be superannuated and set down to do nothing in a country village. Hitherto my strength has been like the widow's cruse—it has never failed me."

"Don't boast: it may give way to-morrow. Do I not know what work at St. Luke's means? I hate to think of you in those close squalid streets."

"Such as it is, it is the very breath of my life. Take me away from St. Luke's and I am nothing."

"You used not to say so."

"No; six months ago I should have thought differently. I have learned to know myself and St. Luke's better now. Don't ask me to leave my people."

Mr. Chichester walked up and down the room hurriedly.

"Such Quixotic nonsense! such a lamentable want of common sense!" he muttered. "I have set my heart on this. We want you near us. It would have pleased Honor—I know it would. She always says our drowsy parish wants waking up. You are just the one to rouse us."

"You are very good, but I am not what you think me," murmured poor Will.

"What do you care what we think of you?" returned Guy, testily. "Just when I want to make every one as happy as I am—not that that is possible," he added, hastily. "I always thought it was your wish to provide a home for your sister; but, now the opportunity has come, you shrink from it."

"You tempt me sorely," returned Will, in an agitated voice. "If it were for her good—but no; I cannot reconcile it to my sense of duty. Mr. Benedict is getting old. I have become almost like a son to him. He has just stinted himself to add another fifty pounds to my salary. You are wrong

when you pity me. I have more than a sufficiency for my needs."

"But your sister," interrupted Mr. Chichester. "Why don't you include her in your list of duties, past, present, and to come?"

"Do you think I have forgotten her? Poor little Dym! No; I am not quite so selfish as that. It is partly for her sake that I refuse."

"Your reasons?" again demanded Guy.

"Pardon me if I keep some of them to myself," returned Will, with a look of pain. His friend's generous persistence distressed him beyond measure. "Probably if you had offered me this last spring, when Dym was with me, I should have accepted it joyfully. I think now that it is better that she should continue independent of me."

"Why so? Her brother is her natural protector. I do not yet know Honor's wishes, but if she leaves us would you turn her on the world again?"

"No, no. Ah, how you harass my resolution! It is hard enough to do one's duty; but if there be a doubt which is one's duty! Give me a few days to think over this. I will speak to Dym herself."

"Do so, by all means," returned Guy, joyfully, who took this hesitation for victory. "I have not a doubt of what Miss Elliott will say."

"After all, she is my first duty," muttered Will, passing his hand wearied over his brow. His manner startled Mr. Chichester, and he looked at him more keenly than he had done yet.

"I wish I could sound all your reasons," he said, abruptly. "There is something behind all this. Well, I suppose it would be no use if I talked till cock-crowing."

"It will be that soon," replied Will, with a strange smile. "Ah, well, you were too happy and I was too thoughtful to sleep. Good-night, Chichester. You won't bear me malice if my conscience falls foul of your wishes?"

"Confound all consciences!" was the somewhat gruff answer. "The worst is, the more a man plagues you and tramples on your pet prejudices, the better you are sure to like him."

"And you will forgive me if I disappoint you?" asked

Will, holding out his thin hand. How white and fragile it looked beside Guy's strong brown one!

"I can forgive you anything but being such a saint," returned Mr. Chichester, in his whimsical way. "There, God bless you, old fellow! I am happy enough to forgive the whole world, and even myself."

CHAPTER XXI.

SUNSHINE AND SHADOW.

THE two friends parted, but not to sleep.

Guy's happiness kept him restless. He would have liked to sit till morning descanting on the manifold perfections of his betrothed; he had kept Will a full hour after the last "good-night" had been said, listening to his animated plans for the future; but the worn weary look on Will's face at last warned him to desist, and to tax no longer his sympathizing patience.

Strong excitement always stimulated Guy Chichester like new wine. Sleep would not come at his bidding. Honor's sweet looks, her words, her few precious caresses, haunted the happy lover; and, though his waking dreams at last terminated in a brief nap, he sprang up long before it was light, and, summoning his faithful companion Kelpie, set out for one of his interminable walks over hill and dale.

Will, on the contrary, lay open-eyed and anxious long after the darkness had passed into twilight, and twilight into the gray dawning of another day.

Such nights were not new to him. Often and often he had risen from his couch and trimmed the midnight lamp, to relieve bodily uneasiness and induce slumber by hard mental labor. In the darkest hours of his pain, such wisdom and strength would come to him that they who saw his pale face radiant with some secret joy would marvel at the triumph of the soul over so frail a body.

While others slept, none saw him kneeling, sometimes for

hours, before his open Bible; none knew of the strong cries for help that went up to heaven—of the bitter conflicts that were fought by one poor priest, whom men pitied; none knew the loneliness of the great heart which was learning every day to know its own weakness more—a heart that had chosen for itself poverty, and the company of Christ's poor, that asked nothing for itself but to spend and be spent in its Lord's service.

And yet there were times when William Elliott reproached himself for unfaithfulness, when his soul was torn by a sense of unfitness and neglect of duty, when his measure of strength seemed small, when he looked for help and found none. Great souls have these crises: it is the refined metal that goes down into the furnace.

Sometimes in our greatest need the sun goes down, and to us there is no Gibeon, no valley of Ajalon; our hosts are fighting rank against rank, good against evil, but it is in utter darkness. What false charges we make! what losses! what bloodshed! our reserve forces are of no avail; our advance, our rearguard, are wounded; where are the standards? which side sends forth the note of victory? Light! light! is all we ask; and shall that be denied?

Could we ourselves feel the force of the temptation that precedes a fall, I think there would be an end to harsh judgment. Many a one fights valiantly for a time, who at the last is overborne to the ground by a sudden charge. Happy those who, though mortally wounded, can rise and fight on!

A terrible anxiety was racking the heart and brain of William Elliott when the gray morning broke and found him watching.

Now and then the steady flow of argument was broken by disconnected recollections.

"Just like him," he thought, "to remember others in the first hour of his happiness; another man would have wrapped himself in pardonable egotism at such a time. What a grand whimsical nature it is!—generous, yet as simple as a child. Was it wrong of me to warn him? A man cannot quite outlive his passions; and she—all women are so sensitive. Why, even I, though I love him dearly, I think we should be better friends apart. His will is so strong that it would almost constrain people to sacrifice their conscience, at least in trifles."

He pondered again, and then broke into a fresh channel: "Only to know what is right—my poor little Dym! And yet it would be cruel kindness. I have had my warning, a double one. 'Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther,' seems written up against me if I take this path. A little while ago, and I should have hailed this offer as a godsend; rest, study, friendship—what more could I ask of life? But now I should soon score underneath them idleness, vacuum, soul-weariness. I am not what I was; this northern air is deleterious to my moral nature. Oh for the safety of the traces again! Shall I venture it for Dym's sake? No, no; I will go back to my old work, though I break down under it."

His right hand clinched itself as it lay on the coverlet, the secret workings of some strong emotion made the cold sweat stand on his forehead. Had he found a lion in his path, that the whole man seemed girding himself up to do battle? "My God, judge Thou the right, for my wisdom has become foolishness to me," he prayed; but still the old argument went on.

"Shall I do evil that good may come? Will it be evil if I do it for my child's sake—she is so young and weak? Will it not be cowardly to shrink from this new work? And yet, if what I fear should happen, would it not have been best to teach her to depend on her own resources, rather than on so sorry a protector? Poor little Dym! and yet it would make her so happy."

And then a sudden weariness came upon him. "I will wait a few days, and then I will speak to Dym," he said to himself. "Woman's instinct is often wiser than man's reason: perhaps when we discuss it together, I may be better able to judge than I am now." And then he slept.

It was the gray dawn of another day when a strange dream came to him. Falling asleep, a sudden remembrance flashed across him of a childish speech Dym had once made to him. Memory plays us these tricks sometimes: mere trifles come to the recollection of dreaming men, they say, and often in that dim border-land between waking and sleep some vivid image of past days will suddenly arise and startle us.

And so it was that Will drowsily bethought himself of a certain deep-hanging lane, full of red ruts and sweet with blackberry thickets, where once, many years ago, he had walked with his little sister.

She was a dark-eyed child then, and he remembered how he had to stoop for her chubby hands to clasp his arm. By and by they had sat down on a stile to rest, and he had gathered her a great bunch of rowan-berries.

"You are my king, Will Conqueror, and this shall be your sceptre," she had said, pushing the crimson glory into his hand.

"A poor king, my pet."

Dym played with the mountain-ash thoughtfully.

"Will, when you grow up, I wonder what sort of a man you will be?"

"What sort? Why, you silly child, like other men, I suppose."

"Oh, no, no!" replied the child, earnestly; "not like other men, Will: you have a look on your face which reminds me of those men in red and blue in the painted window at church."

"Hush, little profanity! those are saints and martyrs."

"Why don't you be a saint and martyr too, dear? and then when you are dead they will put a glory round your head. Wouldn't you like a glory better than anything, Will?"

"I should like to smell blackberries again," muttered Will, dreamily. Where was he? There was the deep rutty lane again, the rowan-trees, and the trail of honeysuckle, but no chubby child's hands met over his arm, no sweet child's face lifted itself in the sunshine.

He sat himself down on the old stile; some birds sang from the nut-copse, a white butterfly glanced hither and thither; the stillness oppressed him, the green gloom of the overhanging trees, the unchanging sunshine; he felt heart-sick, overwhelmed with sadness. Suddenly, by some strange instinct, he knew he was not alone; some unseen power seemed to root him to the spot; he could not look round, and yet he felt impelled to speak.

"Where is the child?" he asked.

"She is a child no longer," responded a voice behind him, "children seldom weep. Do you know me?"

"I know your voice. Don't let me see your eyes; they would frighten me: men cannot look on angels."

"Am I an angel, then?"

"I will hold your white robe tightly—so. No, you must

not leave me. I have lost my way; if you be woman as well as spirit, show me my place."

"Learn wisdom from a child's lips. Look for it among the noble army of martyrs."

"Was she right, then?—will they put a glory round my head?"

"Peace, poor soul! there is no glory needed but His; take this." The robe slipped from his nerveless fingers; he was alone. On the ground lay a cross, heavy and spiked with iron; a blood-red cluster of rowan-berries lay upon it.

And the voice! Waking up, Will fell on his knees and stretched out his trembling hands, for he knew that he had entered into the cloud.

"Have you seen Guy this morning?" was Mr. Chichester's first question, as Will entered the breakfast-room. "Dorothy tells me he has not gone up to London, after all."

"It was not necessary: he thought better of it," returned Will, hesitatingly; he was not sure how far he might trench on his friend's confidence. As he took his seat opposite to his hostess, Mrs. Chichester's eyes, dim as they were, were struck by the young clergyman's paleness.

"You do not take care of yourself, my dear Mr. Elliott; you let Guy keep you up too late at nights."

"It was my own fault," returned Will, mildly; "he surprised me in a fireside meditation when he came in from the Cottage."

"What! did he go over to the Cottage again last night?" Mrs. Chichester's tone had a trifle of displeasure in it.

Will wisely held his peace.

"It is time for me to put in an appearance when you cross-examine my friend in my absence, mother," exclaimed her son, gayly, as he and Kelpie entered at that moment, bringing plenty of fresh air with them.

"Why, how you startle one, Guy!" remonstrated his mother, half laughing. "When are you and Kelpie going to leave off your vagabond ways? Put back your hair, you foolish fellow: have you been walking bareheaded in this wind?"

"Wind! I scarcely felt a breath of air. Faugh! you feel like hot-house plants here," as Will shivered at the opening

door. "Give me some coffee, *madre*, please. I am afraid I am unromantic enough to state I have an enormous appetite this morning."

Mrs. Chichester looked fondly at her son as her hands were busy among the cups and saucers. "How well, how handsome he looked!" she thought; "other men were not to compare with him." Perhaps her maternal eyes were partial. Guy Chichester's face was too irregular and strong-featured to be called handsome, but it was a goodly face enough for all that, bronzed and ruddy with health, his keen eyes sparkling with animation, and the curly head and beard looking none the worse for being dishevelled by the wind. Mr. Chichester ran his hand carelessly through them as he was bid. "I hope you got more sleep than I did, Elliott. Mother, look at him; he has a headache."

"Nothing to mention," returned Will, his pale face flushing a little. "I think, as I have already breakfasted, that I will go to the library and write some letters; that is, if Mrs. Chichester will excuse me."

"Do so, by all means, and then you will be ready to walk over to the Cottage presently."

Mrs. Chichester waited till Mr. Elliott had left the room, and then she turned to her son.

"You almost live at the Cottage, Guy. Now Honor is better, don't you think it would be as well to cease such frequent visits? It sets people talking, and it is all no use."

Guy Chichester pushed away his plate and walked to the window; he was obviously at a loss how to reply.

"I know you do not like advice on this subject, but you ought to see for yourself that Honor disapproves of it. She has seen Mr. Elliott several times, but she has never yet been well enough to admit you."

"On the contrary, I saw her last night."

Mrs. Chichester looked aggrieved.

"You might have told me so before, Guy."

Guy whistled softly, and took another turn across the room. By and by he stopped.

"Mother, should you be glad if I brought you a visitor?"

"That depends upon whom it is. What! you don't mean to say Dr. Grey will let Miss Elliott come home? Oh, Guy, I shall be so delighted to get her back."

"Miss Elliott! always Miss Elliott!" returned Guy, impatiently. "How fond you are of that little thing, mother! Have her back, by all means, if the doctor will let you. Not but what you are right, and she is a dear little creature," he added, repenting of his momentary roughness. "But I was not speaking of her. Mother, may I bring Honor?"

His tone was so peculiar that Mrs. Chichester looked up into his face quite startled, and what she saw there made her cast her arms about his neck.

"Oh, Guy, my dear, dear boy! has it come right at last?"

"At last, mother."

"Thank God for it! I have wished it, you know I have wished and prayed for it, Guy."

"I believe you have, mother."

"It has come to this, that I have been driven to wish my own son were lost to me; if I did not love you better than myself, I should be a miserable woman now."

"Nay, I hope not, *mère chérie*."

"Do you think a mother is happy when she loses her only son? You are my boy—my boy with my husband's eyes—and I must give you up to Honor."

"I can belong to my wife and to my mother too."

"Mothers are strange things. Forgive me, Guy, I am a jealous old woman; but you were my only one, and I have made you my idol. God has punished me for it by giving us all this misery. But you are going to be happy now, my dear. We shall all be happier, shall we not?"

She took her son's hand and kissed it. Guy's heart smote him as he looked down on this fond faithful creature. "He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow." Had he been all to her that he ought to have been? Had he not left her to her loneliness, distressed her with his strange humors, burdened her with his sorrows, and had she ever reproached him? Since his boyhood she had been his gentle companion; the beautiful young mother he remembered singing lullabies over his infant cot had become to him the loving friend of his manhood. He was a man when she had come to him and wept out her widowed tears on his breast. How she had clung to him! With what fond words, with what sacred tears, she had prayed her boy to comfort her! And yet had there not been times when her very love had wearied

him—when his pride had chafed under those soft exactions—when he could have wished those silken bonds could have held him no longer? How her jealousy had fretted him! He had revolted against the sweet tyranny of her monopoly—his mind had larger needs than those of which her woman's soul had dreamed. The widow would have kept her son to herself; but what had he become?—a wanderer, a citizen of the world, a voluntary exile. A disappointed love had been her rival; a woman's fair face had come between her son and happiness, and had made discord in their quiet home.

She had taught herself to wish that Honor Nethecote would be his wife; but could she—would she ever be able to love her? The daughter-in-law she had imagined for herself was some soft clinging creature, whom she could have petted and patronized—some one like Dym Elliott, for example, only with Honor's beauty. Would Honor ever come into her heart of hearts and be a daughter to her? How coldly she had ever borne herself to Guy's mother! There had been no lack of gentleness, perhaps; but the pride, the chilling reserve of her manner, the quiet unchanging rebuke for the distrust that had come between them. Yes, she had injured Honor; but was it not for the younger and happier woman to forgive such injury? Did not Honor's very superiority and nobleness of nature lead her to such reconciliation? The narrowness, the soft bigotry, the pardonable jealousy, that had weakened Mrs. Chichester's influence with her son were impossible faults with Honor. Her love flowed in broader channels; her generosity feared no rival. Guy might have lavished his affection on a thousand objects, and she would have held her place without a moment's doubt.

A gulf of sadness rolled between this mother and son. These misunderstandings are not rare even between two who love each other; but it may be doubted if the remorse were not heavier on Guy. All sorts of vague regrets agitated the mind of this singular man, always moved by sudden impulses; his mother's kiss humiliated and abashed him. He could have gone on his knees and asked pardon for all his fitful humors. Good heavens! these mothers have such patience! A thousand, ten thousand times he had wronged her gentleness, and she had borne with him as a very angel might have done. Honor, perfect as she was, had not a tithe of her

sweetness and gentleness. What had he done, that two such women should love him?

He cast down his eyes and groaned as Mrs. Chichester ventured on her humble caress. Why should she not humble herself before her boy? "We shall all be happier now, shall we not, dear?" she had asked; but Guy had not as yet bethought himself of an answer.

"Guy, shall I come with you this morning, my dear?"

"You, mother!" rousing up from his reverie. "Why, it is for me to bring Honor to you."

"Nay, my dear, I do not think so," replied Mrs. Chichester, gently. "Six years ago you brought Honor to me; now it is for me to go to her. These cold winds, too, and she is still an invalid. It is not like your wonted wisdom, Guy."

Guy bent down and kissed her abruptly.

"Mother, you are an angel! Yes, you shall come with me." And then, as though he were afraid of trusting himself to say any more, he went quickly out of the room.

The sound of wheels brought Will out of the library. He looked surprised when he saw Mrs. Chichester ready equipped and leaning on her son's arm.

"Are you coming with us, Mr. Elliott?"

"I think so. Dym will be looking for me; but perhaps I may be in your way," he added, hastily, as the reason for this early visit became apparent to him.

Mrs. Chichester smiled graciously.

"My son's friend is never in my way. I am only going to see Honor"—she hesitated slightly, as though words were difficult to her; "Guy will have told you what has happened."

Guy nodded.

"You have my warmest congratulations," was Will's answer, as he treated her to one of his winning smiles. "Your son knows what I think of Miss Nethecote."

"You must reserve your congratulations for Guy," returned Mrs. Chichester, a little sadly. "Do you not remember what the old proverb says about a son marrying?"

"Proverbial philosophy may be at fault sometimes, my dear madam," replied Will, earnestly. "I am no true prophet if you do not find it so in this case. You will have a noble daughter-in-law."

Mrs. Chichester was silent. Every one sang Honor's praises;

but when would Honor come and put her arms round her neck and be a daughter to her?

Honor and Dym were sitting together when Guy's tap was heard at the door. The greeting between the three was a somewhat silent one. Dym was nervous. She thought Guy wanted Honor to himself, and faltered, and almost broke down over the few words she had schooled herself to say to him. Guy saw her embarrassment, and very good-naturedly put an end to it.

"Don't trouble yourself to make a pretty speech, Miss Elliott. I hate congratulations. There, I know exactly what you want to say." And he patted her hand kindly and turned to his betrothed.

"Honor, my mother is down-stairs; she is waiting to see you."

"To see me!" Honor flushed a little, but there was no hesitation in her manner. The visit was evidently unexpected by her. Perhaps in her inmost heart she had wished for a delay; but there was no reluctance in her tone as she said, "We had better go down, then."

But there was a little stateliness in her step as she entered the room, and an exceeding quietness of bearing as Mrs. Chichester came forward to meet her and folded her in her arms.

"My dear Honor! I am so glad of this!"

"It is very kind of you to come and see me, Mrs. Chichester: it was for me to come to you."

"I do not think so, Honor."

"Ah, but it was. When Guy told me you were here, I felt sorry that you should have given yourself such trouble. You should have sent for me, and I would have come."

"I wanted to thank you for your goodness to my son."

Honor's head lifted itself a little proudly; but she looked at Guy, and her eyes grew meek instantly.

"For my goodness to myself, you mean," she said, with a soft smile.

Mrs. Chichester looked at her wistfully, and sighed. How lovely she was this morning!—fair enough to gladden any lover's eyes. What mother would not have rejoiced that her son should win for himself such goodness and beauty? And yet Mrs. Chichester sighed.

Honor had placed herself by her side; but already their

hands had insensibly fallen asunder. Under her lover's eyes, Miss Nethecote's brief haughtiness had vanished: in her whole mien there was gentleness tempered with reserve; a large benevolence, a chastened joy too deep for words, shone in the clear gray eyes.

Words seemed to break up the furrows of her thoughts. Utterance was difficult to her. Not even to Guy's mother could she speak of her happiness. It lay down too deep for mere surface sunshine.

Mrs. Chichester found this silence chilling. She was a demonstrative woman. She liked to express her feelings—to talk out her joy aloud. The "fatted calf," the "coals of fire," were to her goodly interpretations of different phases of life. She liked the outward and visible sign of things. She wanted this woman—so sweet in looks, so silent in tongue—to fall on her neck and call her mother; and she felt disappointed, almost to injury.

"We must forget all that has gone before, and make a fresh beginning," she said, a little sadly, when she had waited for Honor to speak, but Honor had still remained silent. "I trust, my dear, that in your heart you have entirely forgiven me."

"For what?" returned Honor, with a look of surprise. "We have forgiven each other, have we not?" The speech jarred on her. Why should the past be brought up again, she thought, to mar the peace of the present? In the old days Mrs. Chichester had not been good to her; but was it for any one to remember it? "Hush! it is not right to speak of this now," she said, with a touch of peremptoriness; but Mrs. Chichester thought her manner was wanting in graciousness.

"I think you are right, Honor," assented Guy, in a low voice. He was holding himself aloof from the two women, watching them anxiously. Was it blame to him if he drew comparisons between them? if, with the omniscience of love, he read Honor's silence aright, and thought his mother's words less beautiful?

"You are so good, Honor, that I know you will feel rightly about this. But I am growing old, my dear: it will make me happier if you will try to love me."

"I will try," returned Honor, simply.

No wonder Mrs. Chichester thought her cold. The daughter she would have had would have knelt at her feet, and kissed her again and again, on hearing such winning words. No marvel if Honor's truthful "I will try" smote chilly on her heart.

She rose, with a little sense of injury breaking the sweetness of her humor. "I will go to Miss Elliott, now. I dare say Guy wants you to himself for a little while;" and, as neither of them dared to controvert the fact that the interview was slightly irksome to all parties, she was not contradicted. Guy moved with some alacrity to the door, and was only just in time to prevent Mrs. Chichester from a hasty stumble over a little carved footstool that stood in her way.

The fall would have been a serious one; and her son felt justified in administering a rebuke.

"Mother, why have you become a foe to all footstools lately? You must remember you are not as young as you used to be, and you ought not to move about so quickly."

"It was very careless of me," returned his mother. She still panted slightly from the shock, and Guy kept his arm round her. From some cause or other, she had turned a little pale.

"You are all right again?" he inquired, tenderly.

"Yes, dear; let me go now." But he still detained her.

"Wait a moment, mother; there is no hurry for Miss Elliott. Stewart gave me some letter you had dropped in the carriage. Let me see, where is it?" He dived into his pockets and soon produced it. "Why, it is from Trichy, and, I declare, the seal still unbroken. Do open it, and let me see what she says about Frank."

"Will it not do presently? I am really in a hurry to get to Miss Elliott. I will tell you all about it at luncheon-time." But Guy chose to be obstinate.

"I would rather hear it now, please."

Mrs. Chichester flushed painfully, and her hand trembled as she broke the seal, and then she handed it to her son. "You may read it for yourself, then, Guy."

"What! before you have looked at it yourself?" he returned, in some astonishment. "I don't think Trichy would care for me to read all her letters. Just run over it, and tell me the contents."

Poor Mrs. Chichester! She was hardly mistress of herself in this emergency. She adjusted her gold eyeglasses with a hand that even her son noticed shook visibly. Her nervous agitation attracted Miss Nethecote's notice. She leaned forward and watched her steadily, and then her face suddenly grew troubled.

"You used not to be such a slow reader, mother; why, you have not turned the first page yet," observed Guy, who already repented of the delay.

"Beatrix's handwriting is so small and cramped; you make me nervous, hurrying me so, Guy."

"Small and cramped! Why, I can read that scrawl from here. Let me see. Yes; 'Frank sends his love, and says he will not fail to execute Guy's commission. There is a dress parade to-day, and Captain Stewart and Major Drummond'—turn it over—Why, mother, you have got it upside down!"

Guy's impatient tone did not mend matters.

"I did not know; there is so little light in the room," she faltered.

"So little light!" echoed Guy, incredulously, for the spring sunshine was flooding the little room.

Honor rose from her seat and put herself between them.

"Don't, Guy! I will not have her teased. Don't you see"—turning to him with a look of pain—"can you not see what is the matter?"

The poor lady stretched out her hands to her son.

"He does not know. I have tried to keep it from him Guy, my dear boy, you must not be impatient with your mother. I cannot see well; I am going blind."

"Blind!" Guy started and turned pale. Honor looked pitifully up into his face, as he put her aside and took his poor mother in his arms. What improbable tale was this she was telling him? He looked at her eyes almost angrily; and then he could not disguise from himself that some film seemed gathering over their brown brightness. "Blind!" he repeated, in a voice of despair. "Oh, mother, mother!" The poor fellow could hardly contain himself for pity and horror. His heart, always tender over misfortune, swelled indignantly against this new affliction.

Mrs. Chichester leaned her head against his shoulder. The pain of concealment was over; her secret was hers no longer.

Her son's arms were round her; she felt almost comforted. She cried a little, it is true; and then yielded herself to the sweetness of the consolation.

Guy's misery was intense. If he had ever cloaked his love under a garb of willfulness or roughness, it stood revealed now; and he knew that in her helplessness she would be dearer to him than the mother of his youth had been. His sad face touched Honor inexpressibly.

"Dear Guy, this blindness may not be irremediable," she half whispered. But Mrs. Chichester heard her.

"They think it is cataract. It will be partial blindness for a few months, perhaps years, Dr. Garnet says. You must not fret about it, Guy. I shall get used to it; and perhaps in a few years, if I consent to an operation, my sight may be restored to me, if—if——"

"If what, darling mother?"

"If what Dr. Garnet fears does not happen." And, in answer to her son's further questions, she admitted that during the past month or two certain symptoms had occurred that made the doctor hesitate in pronouncing it simple cataract. There had been a great deal of pain; and she readily acknowledged that the wisest way would be to place herself without delay under an experienced oculist.

"We will go to town at once. Mother, you have acted wrongly in not telling me before. This delay may be fatal."

Mrs. Chichester shook her head.

"No, Guy; if my fears be true, no oculist can do anything for me. Do not distress yourself, dear. The world will not be quite dark to me when you are in it. When it grows very hard, you must help me to bear it." And she stretched out her hands to her son again; but it was not he who caught them and pressed them to his breast.

"Yes, we will help you, Guy and I. Do not cry. You will have two children to love and cherish you. I will work for you, and read to you, and you shall tell me how to comfort you."

Was that Honor kneeling at her feet, with the tears running down her face? Were those Honor's arms wrapped so tenderly about her? Could it be Honor's voice so broken and full of love?

"You are Guy's mother, and you shall be mine too. I

did not love my own mother more dearly than I will love you. When Guy brings me home, you will let me be your daughter?"

"My own daughter!" And as Honor dried the dim eyes on her own handkerchief, and kissed the cheek that had grown wan and faded lately, Mrs. Chichester's head dropped upon that pure bosom, and she whispered, "My God, I thank Thee for this; for whereas I was blind, now I see." And Honor, looking up, read her reward in her lover's eyes.

CHAPTER XXII.

WILL CASTS IN HIS LOT WITH ST. LUKE'S.

A FEW days after the eventful family gathering at Nidderdale Cottage, Honor and Dym were sitting together, when William Elliott quietly made his appearance.

It was Dym's last day at the Cottage.

On the following afternoon Mrs. Chichester and her son were going up to London, and Honor had consented to accompany them. Will had promised to take his sister to Ingleside and remain a week with her, and then he would go back to St. Luke's.

On the morrow Humphrey Nethecote would be left alone.

A few days only had passed, but already preparations had been set on foot for the marriage. Neither Guy nor Honor was young: their mutual affection had been proved without a doubt. In this case there was nothing to invite delay; even Humphrey could not raise an objection.

"We have already lost six of our best years," Guy said to his betrothed: "and though I am loath to hurry you, Honor, I think we should not go far into the seventh."

And Honor, who took blame on herself for "that long-drawn-out pain," could not find it in her heart to plead for a little delay.

"I will do as you wish," was her simple answer. "When you are ready for me, I will come to you. I am not strong yet, Dr. Grey says, but I grow less weak every day."

"These bleak winds try you," returned Guy, fondly. Honor's face still lacked the pure healthy coloring of old. It had always been pale, but now it was almost transparently white, and the eyes were too large and *spirituelle*-looking. "The change south will do you good. If we set half the London milliners and dressmakers to work, do you think you can be ready for me by the middle of May?" he added, mischievously.

He was a little baffled by the smile that accompanied her answer. Of course she would be ready for him. Had he bidden her, she would have married him in the dress she wore. Such things were valueless in her eyes, except as they pleased him. She would have put her hand in his, and followed him through the world, if he had asked her. Had she not given him her heart—her faithful, sorely-tried heart? Was he not her "bosom's lord"? Had she not elected him king in her woman's kingdom, and could she say him nay in a matter of days and seasons?

What had become of the strong will that had dared to assert itself against an imperious lover—that had held itself steadily, with secret anguish, through so many long years? Had trouble wrought this gentleness? Was love making her meek? Perhaps so; love sometimes works such miracles. But there was no inconsistency in Honor's nature; she was not less strong, but she gave with more generosity. The "man whom her soul delighted to honor" had vanquished her by his noble love; and this time the woman within her had agreed to a total surrender. Guy secretly marveled at her gentleness. Was it part of her code of faith that she should never contradict him? Her sweetness often made his heart ache with a dull sad feeling of remorse.

"Are you sure you like this? that you are not doing it to please me?" he would ask her, anxiously, when, as usual, she had referred some arrangement to him.

"In pleasing you I am pleasing myself," she returned, softly. "These things are of no consequence to me, but I know they will give pleasure to you and to your mother. Indeed, Guy, you must not thank me," as he looked at her with grave wistfulness: "such a labor of love can hardly weary me."

But even then he would hardly be satisfied. Sometimes her submission grieved him: he wanted to be generous too. There

were times when his lordly nature would have loved to humble itself before this woman, when he wanted to feel that she had quelled the demon within him; when, in his chivalrous ardor, he would have donned his armor and gone down into the thickest of the battle to do her bidding. Sometimes there would be a contest between these two generous souls—each wished to give up. There was still the strife of wills: both wished to be first in self-sacrifice; but it was the man whose vows were loudest, the woman always immolated herself.

I am afraid it is the truth that most women delight in self-sacrifice: they are forever kneeling in reverence—they resist the hand that raises them. If they are victims, they delight in their garlands. They are ever making ovations and crowning their hero. Bring forward the wreaths of laurel and bay and parsley! They keep all the bitter herbs—the rue, the anise—for themselves. Do you blame them that they weep over empty thrones sometimes? Where is the Ideal? Gone. The Real lies trailing in the dust with dishonored hairs: the crowns are faded. Where are the fond votaries now? Need you ask?—there on the ground beside them, composing the drapery, covering the sorry wreck with a decent veil, weeping cleansing tears over them, and by and by raising them with weak loving hands and bringing them back to the right path again.

Dym, who was rather a hard censor, as most young persons are before the knowledge of their own angles softens those of other people, felt herself a little disappointed in her estimate of Miss Nethecote's character, when she saw the earnestness, and even anxiety, with which she applied herself to the business of the trousseau. She and Mrs. Chichester were from morning to night arranging and descanting on the several shades of colors and the difference of material. Guy used to laugh when he came in to fetch Honor for a walk or drive, and found them in the thick of an argument between satin and moire-antique. Honor would be sitting with bent brows over a paper list—for all shopping was to be deferred till they got to London—and Mrs. Chichester, oblivious of the knitting in her lap, would be nodding her head and smoothing her dress with soft excited fingers, as one article after another was specified and checked off.

"Grogram again," Guy would say, with a whimsical smile.

"What! is it necessary to be married in all these dresses, Honor?"

But Dym, who knew his ways, saw he was not ill pleased.

The girl had her secret grumble out one day, when Honor and she were alone—which was seldom enough. Mrs. Chichester was always at the Cottage, and Guy came morning, noon, and night, and woe betide them all if Honor were absent or busy; his self-sacrifice would not brook her for more than a few hours out of his sight. Dym used to pity Honor for having so exacting a lover, but in her heart she thought it delightful: could any one be more handsome or chivalrous? she thought.

Humphrey used to quiz them sometimes in his slow way; he called them silent and unsociable; and in truth they were very quiet lovers. Dym's shrewd girlish eyes read differently. She saw that Honor was always grave and preoccupied when Guy was not with her; and there was a look in Guy's face, as he followed her slow graceful movements about the room, that told Dym she was the light of his eyes, and the very joy of his heart.

Dym had her own code of ideas on the subject of lovers, and she chose to consider herself a little aggrieved at the fuss and ceremony Honor seemed to consider necessary; not that it was her business, she told herself. It must be confessed that Dym was strangely irritable just now.

"I never can understand the fuss people make over weddings and funerals," she said, in her quick dogmatic way, when Honor had asked her opinion on some trifle or other. "I suppose I like feathers and finery as much as women generally do, but somehow it seems to take off the sacredness of it so."

"I will decide on having a silver-gray silk; Guy likes it. Yes, I know what you mean," looking up. "These things seem incongruous when you are not inclined for them; but one cannot go against custom."

"I never expected to hear that from you, Honor! you are the most unconventional woman I know. I should not have thought," hesitating a little, as though her words might be considered ungracious, "that you would care so much for these things, especially now."

"Why, it is only now that I have begun to care for them. My dear Dym," smiling now as she caught sight of Dym's

serious face, "it is very certain that you have never been in love."

"How can you tell that?" returned Dym, obstinately. She flushed up as though Honor's words annoyed her. She was subject to all sorts of cold and hot fits just now.

Mr. Chichester made up his mind his little friend was capricious, but Will grew more gentle with her every day.

"If you had been in love you would understand why I do care so much. You cannot think the pleasure that all this gives me," she went on, softly. "Don't you know Guy will see me in all these dresses? Have you not found out what a critic he is in such a matter?"

"He said once he liked white," observed Dym, half to herself.

"I shall have some white dresses certainly, evening as well as morning," returned Honor, accepting the suggestion with all gravity. "I have known Guy so long that I have discovered all his favorite shades. Some colors quite hurt his eyes. It costs me a little trouble, but I know it will gratify him."

She finished with so sweet a smile that Dym felt rebuked for her censoriousness. But not even Dym, affectionate and honest-hearted as she was, could guess the breadth and depth of a love like Honor's.

It was just at this juncture that Will entered.

"I did not expect to find you here, Miss Nethecote." he said, with a little surprise, as he quietly greeted them both.

"Mr. Chichester has gone to York," returned Honor, with the frank blush with which she always spoke of him, "and it is so bitterly cold that I have not ventured to go up to Ingleside. Mrs. Chichester is coming presently, I believe."

"Yes; she has sent her love, and she will be with you in an hour or two."

"You are tired," observed Honor, with one of her quiet glances, as he drew an easy-chair to the fire and spread his thin hands over the blaze.

The corners of Will's mouth showed the fragment of a smile.

"Your supposition is correct, Miss Nethecote, I am afraid. Your happy valley is not to compare with Rasselas's. I think even *ennui* is preferable to east wind."

"Ah, it has made your rheumatism worse."

"Nothing of which to speak," was the somewhat comical answer. "I have only been flagellated by a scourge at every street-corner. I think those Greek pagans were to be forgiven for their superstition, when they thought a noisy divinity was bawling in their ears in an unknown language. I wonder if their bones ever ached when they worshiped him."

Honor's only answer was to pile one fragrant pine-knot on another. Will watched the strong white hands as they handled the smooth logs so deftly. When she had done, she still kept the place on the rug, looking down on him.

Most women look better in a sitting than in a standing attitude; they can walk, but few have the art of posing themselves gracefully. Honor Nethecote never looked better than she did now; her grand figure drawn to its full height; her hands folded before her; the set of her head perfect; but her eyes, how kindly they looked at Will!

"Miss Nethecote, why will you make me feel so uncomfortable?" Will would have elucidated his own words by rising and offering his chair, but she stopped him.

"Please do not disturb yourself; I like standing."

"Well, you have the advantage of me every way," returned Will, resignedly, but with a touch of gentle sarcasm. "It appears I am to look up to you in spite of my efforts to hold my own."

"For shame, Mr. Elliott! Dym, why do you let your brother talk so?" And there was a generous flash in Honor's eyes. "After that I must take the lowest seat I can find, to be sure that I have brought myself to my proper level."

"Can we always find our level?" returned Will, softly. "The ground would have to open and let a few of us sink through it, in that case. Perhaps, as I am here to ask your assistance, you had better resume your former commanding position, Miss Nethecote."

"My assistance!" with some surprise; but the gentleness of her look added, "How can you find it in your heart to be so satirical to me?"

"Yes, if you will be so good as to give it," was the courteous answer. Will was properly grave now.

Honor had beckoned Dym to the cosy-looking chair beside her, and Will, shading his eyes from the sudden blaze, could see the two upturned faces directed towards him with some

little anxiety; at least, Honor's looked anxious. Dym hardly knew if Will were jesting or in earnest. Evidently Will was in no hurry to explain himself; he leaned back in his chair, and his left hand toyed with the little gold cross—a gift from Dym—that hung suspended to his watch-chain, as he noted the pleasantness of the fireside picture; Dym's shadowy little face—no longer bright and sparkling—and Honor's fair profile and coronet of ruddy brown hair.

"What is it, Will?" asked Dym, at last, somewhat wearily.

She stirred a little as Will began his subject; Honor listened with grave intentness; she was evidently prepared for what he had to say. When he had finished, Dym caught her breath, and then sat up and looked at him with a moved face between laughing and crying.

"Well, Dym."

"Oh, Will, is it really true? How kind, how generous, of Mr. Chichester! Oh, I am so glad!" And the little creature —for she was a little creature beside Honor—sprang up from her seat and threw her arms round his neck.

"Softly, my dear child. Why, what an excited Dym it is! We have not talked about it yet." And, as Will gently freed himself from her embrace, a cloud came over his face that was not lost on Honor.

"Dym, dear, I do not think your brother has finished all he has to say."

"Of course not. We shall not have finished all night long," exclaimed Dym, in the same hysterical voice. "Oh, Will, to think you will not be worked to death any more at that dreadful old St. Luke's!"

Will did not answer for a moment; it was one of his wise ways not to speak quickly when he was annoyed, and Dym's speech had jarred terribly on him. The time had been when he could have found it in his heart to echo Dym's vehement assertion; when he too had revolted against the poverty and squalor of his surroundings; when he had thought the hand-to-hand fight against brutal ignorance and unreasoning sin a very pitiful contest indeed. And now it had come to this, that he could not bear a word against St. Luke's; that he had been called upon to declare that this work was the breath of life to him. How had it come to pass that he had so cast in his lot among his people that the thought of separation was

still further embittering his toil-worn life? Is not rest sweet, even to the faithful laborers? Do not their eyes grow weary at times in looking at the harvests they have reaped?

In William Elliott's mind there was strange conflict, but there was peace; a laborious sadness, the result of physical exhaustion, was continually weighing down the brave spirit. "None more willing," he had said to Guy Chichester; "none weaker," he might have added.

Struggles of this sort are most painful to witness; flesh and blood revolts against the unnatural combat. One sees at the beginning the poor body will have the worst of it. The lamps burn brighter; the spirit looks forth from the eyes—merciless, undaunted; the fierce wrestling goes on; the dust is stained with blood and sweat. "These men have borne the burden and heat of the day," but not for that will they rest.

When the battle is nearly at an end, there is a quick rally; the troops are put in order for a last charge; in the arena the race runs hottest at its close; the winning-post is near, the fainting victor already sees the crowns and chaplets of triumph; when the day deepens into evening, the faithful servant girds up his loins and watches for his master's coming. Shall the race wait? Shall the battle be half fought? Shall the talent be laid by in a napkin? "Not so," said William Elliott, for here lay the clue to an apparent inconsistency: "the night cometh when no man can work."

Did Dym guess she had hurt him, that she laid her cheek so fondly against his?

"I could not help it, Will; it is such a great, ugly, dingy place, and you never get a moment's rest when you are there."

Will listens with a curious smile.

"Is it dingy?" he wonders. There are wide street-corners, where the sweet air blows straight from Hampstead and Highgate; there are patches of green to be seen between the houses; when he walks up the street, the children look at the bowed figure and the bright kindly eyes, and smile and curtsy; the women come to the door with rough neighborly greeting; and even the sweep in Paradise Row pulls a grimy forelock as he passes. He has friends among them—many and many a one. It is not all rags and filth and wretchedness. How many life-histories he has conned among them—noble ones some of them—that would put to shame the most exciting fiction ever

written! Humble heroes and heroines in real life, with unwashed faces perhaps, with rough knobby hands, with threadbare coats and patched gowns. Will knows them all; he has sat among them and given them the right hand of fellowship often and often.

Will likes to see the children he has baptized growing up about him; he gathers the bigger ones around him on Sunday afternoons, and tells them Bible stories—childish histories of Joseph and Samuel and Timothy. Little Dick Maynard thinks he would like to be Samuel best; Samuel's little coat, the altar-lights, the swaying censers, Eli's hoary head, the hush, the mystery, the soft coloring, have wrought a vast impression on the crippled boy. Dick rehearses it all in the little garret when he and his family of linnets are alone. "When I grow up I mean to be a prophet," says Dick, with a flicker of his sandy eyebrows.

Poor little childish dreamer! The linnets sing on in their cage; the crutches are propped against the wall; the dust gathers on the accordion; Dick's little worn cap hangs against the door. Where is Dick himself? Ask the childless parents as they gather round their empty hearth; ask stalwart Richard Maynard, who took the loss of his crippled boy so ill that his honest heart nearly broke under it; ask Susan, wiping the tears with her apron from her comely face, as Guy Chichester puts the same question.

"Dead and gone, sir. After what happened, he just fretted his dear self away; took on and pined like double his years. Those are his birds, sir. Richard will not let any one clean them but himself. And there are his school-books, written so prettily; he was a rare scholar when Mr. Elliott learned him. Going, sir? Ah, well, there isn't much to detain you here now!" And Susan wipes some more tears away as Guy Chichester goes out of the door.

All sorts of thoughts come into Will's mind as Dym nestles at his side and Honor sits thoughtfully gazing into the fire; and he rouses himself with difficulty and looks at his sister.

"I was afraid you would take it in this way, Dym."

"Afraid! why, dear?"

"I might have known you would be glad for me to leave St. Luke's. Perhaps I ought not to have told you, but I want you to advise me; you—and you too," looking at Honor.

Miss Nethecote seemed a little disturbed.

"Surely you cannot doubt what our advice will be! But, then," breaking into a little smile, "we are not disinterested."

"You would have me accept the squire's offer?"

"Have you any objection, Mr. Elliott?"

"Pardon me, that is begging the argument. I mean, do I dare to hope that I should be welcome among you, in spite of my infirmities?"

Miss Nethecote leaned towards him and stretched out her hand.

"More welcome than I dare to tell you. Come, and we will prove it, Mr. Elliott."

"Thanks," replied Will, hastily, as he returned the cordial pressure; "I may hope, then, that you will be my friend in this matter, Miss Nethecote?"

"Most surely," the touched gravity of her face bearing witness to her words.

"Then may I ask you not to add one iota of your persuasion to this, but to help this poor child to see it in another light, and to soften the squire's disappointment if I feel bound to refuse his goodness?"

"Will, you are not serious!" exclaimed Dym, starting from her kneeling posture.

"Sit down again, Dym, and answer me a question. Do you wish this for your sake, or mine?"

"For both our sakes. Oh, Will, how can you think I could be so selfish as only to think of myself? Of course it would be delightful to live with you and do everything for you." She went on rather less soberly. "We could have the very cottage that we planned to live in; there is one to let in the village; such a tiny place! with a honeysuckle over the porch, and a strip of garden in front; there is a little room looking on to the weir, where you could write your sermon; and such a beautiful rowan-tree over the gate!"

Will shivered; rowan and rowan-berries always reminded him of his dream. "It is all very pretty, Dym, and very inviting, but your cottage wants something else?"

"What is that?"

"A quiet conscience."

"Nonsense, Will!"

"Ah, but it does. The little room looking over the weir

may be well enough, but how am I to get my sermons written, if I am not to practice what I preach?"

"Dym does not understand you," observed Honor. She had not once taken her eyes off the brother and sister; she began to apprehend Will's meaning—he was nerving himself for a refusal.

"But she will try to understand me, will she not?" was the gentle answer. "I know how you would like that cottage, Dym; and it is just that that makes it so hard to decide. I know, too, that for some things it would be better for you to come to me when you leave Ingleside."

"You think, then, she must leave it," interrupted Miss Nethecote; but her color rose with the question.

"Yes," returned Will, looking at her. "I know what your generous purpose is, Miss Nethecote, but it will not answer. Dym feels it too: she has told me that when you come as mistress to Ingleside her work there will be over."

"I thought, perhaps—" but there Honor hesitates, and again Will gave her one of his mild glances.

"I can interpret your thoughts better than you can," he said, cheerfully. "I know you too well to fear you will do the injustice to either her or yourself to allow her to take a daughter's place at Ingleside; your very love to your future husband insures your devotion to his mother."

"How well you read me!" returned Honor—and this time the frank eyes were swimming in tears; "this is what I wish—what I have desired with all my heart to do, only I cannot bear that Dym should be banished."

"She will not be banished from your love, Miss Nethecote. I know Dym well enough to be sure she would not willingly usurp your place; and, knowing this, it does seem hard to send her out into the world again."

"I am older and wiser now. I can work," interrupted Dym, proudly. Will passed his hand over the soft hair with a caressing gesture.

"You will work, and bravely too, dear. I have never doubted your courage, Dym; but you will think me hard for all that."

"I do not understand you, certainly," was the uncompromising answer—Dym's heart was growing a little sore and angry over Will's strange hesitation—"when we have always

wished to live together, when you have so often been lonely and wanted me."

"I shall always want you, Dym darling. I wish I could take you back to St. Luke's with me now; but"—a strange earnestness coming into his voice—"my heart fails me when I think of leaving my work."

Dym did not answer; and he went on: "I am not fit for new places. I am a poor creature, Dym, and the old grooves fit me best. The time has gone by," he went on, more hurriedly, "when I should have been happy in this dream-cottage of ours. I should like to have you near me, but I should be restless without my work. Granted that the strain is great, that I have too much to do at St. Luke's, it is better to wear out than rust out—as I should do here."

"For shame, Will! rust out among your friends, and in this lovely place!"

Will shook his head sadly.

"Even here; the worn-out hack runs best in its old traces. You want to turn me out to grass, Dym, and I have no appetite for it; even the weir and the honeysuckle will be less sweet to me than the children's faces in the dingy streets you hate."

"Will, is this your only reason?"

Perhaps Dym's question was abrupt, for Will's pale face grew a little paler over it.

"If I have other reasons—good only to myself—my child must trust me with them," he returned, quietly. "They lie between me and my conscience. Will you try not to think me too hard, Dym, because I have refused to share with you the only little gleam of sunshine that has fallen across our path? Will you forgive, and trust me still that I am doing the right thing, though you do not know all my reasons?"

It must have been a sullen nature that could have resisted that pleading voice. Dym could not. "I have nothing to forgive; you are always right, Will," faltered the little sister; but evidently the struggle was a hard one, for as he stooped down and kissed her she suddenly caught her hands from his and sprang away; and Honor could hear a low sob as the door closed behind her.

Will rose, as though to follow her, and then he sat down again.

"She is a dear good child," he murmured, and his tone was full of pain. "Miss Nethecote, you will keep your promise? you will try to comfort her for her disappointment, and help Mr. Chichester to see this in its true light?"

"I will try, but I am rather doubtful of my success. If you knew how he has set his heart on this—he and all of us!"

"It does me good to hear it. When I go back to St. Luke's it will be sweet to remember that you all wished me to come among you. Believe me, I am not ungrateful—you do not think me so?" hesitating as though for her to speak.

"No, not ungrateful; no one who knows you could entertain such a thought for a moment; but I think you are wrong."

"In what?" returned Will, with a sudden flush.

"Do you need to ask the question?" she replied, looking at him with eyes full of kindness. "We are your friends, and yet you deny us your confidence. You are in trouble; you have some secret fear or anxiety upon you; rather than tell us, you will go back to St. Luke's and bear it alone. Is this fair, is this kind, Mr. Elliott?"

For one moment the thought crossed Will's mind that he would partially unburden himself to this large-hearted woman, who looked at him with such honest eyes, whose voice was so full of sympathy; but the next minute he rejected it with scorn: it was weak, cowardly; he knew enough of Miss Nethecote's benevolent nature to be sure it would cast a shadow over her brightness, she was so pitiful over any sort of suffering.

"Some walk in sunshine, and some in shadow, each in his own path; it will not lighten the burden because I shift it off on other shoulders," thought Will.

"Will you trust me?" she repeated, coming a little closer to him.

"I cannot," replied poor Will; his head drooped on his breast, a sudden pain tortured the poor heart. Was this the end of it all—had he been wrong—was it all a mistake? Who knows?

"At least you will let us do all we can for you?" pleaded Honor. "When I was sick, you visited me; when I was unhappy, you consoled me; it is you to whom we owe our happiness. Guy and I will never forget that."

"I only did my duty," responded Will, sadly; "it was one

more to whom to minister. You have your life before you, Miss Nethecote—I told you so then." He paused: some change came over his face, some strange energy into his voice, and, as she was about to speak, with some sudden impulse he turned and blessed her as she stood.

The rooms at Nidderdale Cottage were empty when Humphrey came back to them the next evening. Will had taken his sister up to Ingleside, and he and Dym were having a quiet time together.

Dym secretly reproached herself for not enjoying it more; in spite of her efforts the week wore slowly away. Will was all that she could wish; he drove out with her, walked with her up and down the sunny terraces, read and talked to her, but still there was something wanting. Reading and conversation had lost their flavor; strange silences fell between this brother and sister, who had hitherto been all in all to each other. In Dym's manner there was a little reserve, a slight infusion of gravity. Will's gentleness could not lay the uneasy spirit. Will, as he looked at her, sometimes feared that something had quelled the sweet buoyancy of her spirits forever.

What was it? I wonder if Dym could have answered? A secret dissatisfaction troubled her serenity. Was she sick or unhappy, that this sudden loathing had come upon her? You may be sure Will dealt tenderly with the girl's soreness and irritability. Had her faith in him received a shock? Did she distrust the kindness that had refused to make a home for her?

Will could not tell; they had never referred to the conversation they had had at the Cottage. Dym talked little about St. Luke's; she listened patiently, but without interest, when Will told her about the new schools that Mr. Chichester had promised to build, and how, when the vicarage was finished, he was to have rooms in it, and live with Mr. Benedict, who was a childless widower.

"I shall be quite rich then," observed Will, cheerfully. "Fifty pounds a year more, and no rent to pay. You will come and stay with me then, Dym, weeks and weeks at a time. You know Mr. Benedict will be glad to have you for your own sake as well as mine. His sister, Mrs. Musgrave, comes to him for months together."

"Yes, Will," returned Dym, languidly. Come to him—

of course she would come to him. She looked at Will with puzzled eyes when he asked how soon she would have to leave Ingleside. How could she know? There were all sorts of plans revolving in Mr. Chichester's mind, Dym believed; something was said of his taking Honor away for a long time. Honor wanted to see Rome and Switzerland; and then Dr. Grey had spoken of a winter at Mentone; it might be that she would be still at Ingleside for months.

"I am glad to hear it," was Will's reply. But there was the same dull puzzled look in Dym's dark eyes; was she glad too? perhaps so. It had come to this, that the very stones of Ingleside were dear to her; that she would rather stay there in the empty solitary rooms than leave it for another place.

Dym had her visitings of compunction after Will had left her: after all, had she treated him kindly?

She came out and fingered his wraps with little cold hands when the carriage drove round to take him to the station, and then busied herself with the parcels of sandwiches the housekeeper had thoughtfully sent up as provision for the journey.

"I suppose you send your love to Dick?" inquired Will, as he invested himself with some difficulty into his great-coat.

"Yes, yes," she returned, bursting into tears. Oh, why had she been so hard and disagreeable to him? He was everything to her—father and mother and sister and brother in one; he had never thwarted her, never spoken unkindly to her all her life long, and yet how often she had been cross with him!

"Take care of yourself. I cannot bear you to go. Promise me you will come and see me again," she sobbed, clinging to him.

Will looked at her in a little surprise, but he was kinder than ever, Dym thought in her penitence. She stood at the door waving her hand and trying to smile as the carriage rolled down the sweep; he could see the flutter of her gray dress on the terrace long after he was down the hill; the sun was shining on the vicarage walls as he passed, on the gay beds of crocuses, on the green meadows with their clumps of alders and small black cattle; the mill-wheel was whirring as he passed, and two of the miller's rosy-faced daughters were gathering up the piles of sweet sun-dried linen; down by the river there was shadow and coolness; the water came frothing

over the great stones; above was a gray sweep with a dull brightness on it; there was the cottage with the porch and the rowan-tree; and then Will folded his arms and looked no more.

Dym had a long cheerful letter before many days were over. Will spoke as though he were glad to be back at his work again; he was better and stronger; his long rest had refreshed him; he was ready to throw himself heart and soul into his labors. Every one had welcomed him, from Dick, who had composed a new tune on the occasion, to old cross-grained Widow Bates, who had actually scolded him in one breath for gadding about, and then told him that he was a "sight good for sore eyes." Will had seen his Birstwith friends twice; Mr. Chichester had made one of his headlong descents on St. Luke's, and had carried him off, in spite of his entreaties to the contrary, to the pleasant Kensington house where they had established themselves.

It was an artist's house, Will told her; a sunshiny old place with a long narrow lawn and a cedar-tree, with curious landing-places, and odd-shaped rooms full of heavy carved furniture; the studio opened out of the drawing-room, where they took their coffee. Will from his seat had a strange vista before him: suits of armor, velvet doublets, tall goblets of red Venetian glass, sunshine, fencing-foils, a statue or two, yards and yards of finished and unfinished paintings.

Will put in a little bit of painting himself very prettily; he made Dym see it all. Honor in her white dress standing against the crimson drapery; Guy leaning negligently against a bust of Pallas Athenè; Mrs. Chichester in her brocade and ruffles, sitting so erect in her high-backed chair. "Miss Nethecote sang to us; she has a beautiful voice, mellow and rich. I liked to hear Chichester's grand bass chiming in now and then," wrote Will. Dym put down the letter with a little sigh. How plainly she could see it all! There was a pleasant perfumy sweetness about the picture; there must have been tulips in the tall Venetian glasses; little spots of violet-fragrance dotted here and there about the room; the window would be open, and reflect the shadow of the cedar. Dym could almost hear the short racy sentences scattered broadcast from behind the bust of Pallas Athenè, and Honor's voice chiming like silver bells.

One day they had all come down to St. Luke's, almost taking Will's breath away. Paradise Row had never known such an excitement as when Mrs. Tressilian's fine carriage had put them down and rolled away. One little urchin had cried "Hurrah!" when Jeames, in his plush and powder, had clambered up beside his friend the coachman. Poor little man! even the smart hammercloth was a mystery and astonishment. The horses curveted as grandly as the pony in the circus, Dick confided to his mother afterwards. One may imagine with what feelings Dick clutched his crutches and shuffled away as the tall lady with the kind eyes came up the steps; even Mrs. Chichester's white curls were alarming. Dick's accordion sounded a few terrified notes as it rolled down into the area.

"Is Mr. Elliott at home, my little man? There's a bright sixpence for you. Surely you have not forgotten your old friend?"

Dick's bright eyes dance delightedly as they go into the narrow passage. "Was it for this he refused to come to us?" thinks Honor.

There is the open door, the bending figure over his books; a little, fiendish-looking, dusty kitten squatting at his elbow. How small and dingy it is! Flower-pots and books, shouting children, and dullness. Will pushes back his hair with a little bewilderment, as Mrs. Chichester's white curls and Honor's beautiful face come within the radius of his vision.

"Ah ha! we have caught you!" cries Guy, taking him by the shoulders. "The spider in his den—the student at his books. Do the inhabitants of Kentish Town understand the mystery of five o'clock tea, I wonder? We have come to tea—my mother and Honor and I—and we want you to show us St. Luke's, and the new vicarage, and the site for the schools—to do the honors of Kentish Town, in fact."

Will tries hard to wake out of his bewilderment, as he shuts up Hooker's "Ecclesiastical Polity." Will Mrs. Maynard's kettle be boiling? Has she teacups and saucers enough? He remembers guiltily that, in a moment of weakness, he had given his afternoon portion of milk to the thirsty kitten.

But Mrs. Maynard had two capital ingredients in her character—resources and ideas. Will wonders mildly as all manner of good things group themselves on the table: milk—no, it is actually cream, cool Devonshire butter—a crusty loaf, a very

chef-d'œuvre of bakery, tea-cakes and marmalade, even a few pink prawns reposing on green leaves. Worthy Mrs. Maynard gives a little nod of triumph as she leaves the room; and Will blesses her in his heart. Honor takes her place, and makes tea with her usual quiet grace; the rest gather round the table; the kitten finds its way to Guy's knee, and is petted and christened "Demon" on the spot. This is better than the studio at Kensington, Will thinks; his worn face—and Honor thinks it is paler and more worn since she saw it last—lights up at the sight of these dear people gathered round his little table. How happy they all are! what a running fire of wit and raillery from Guy! He is full of mischief to-night; he rails a little on the subject of Honor's finery; he declares that half the shopwomen in London are engaged on that fabulous trousseau. Honor bears it well; the bright smiling eyes enjoy the fun, but in Will's opinion she looks just a trifle jaded.

"We shall all be glad when we get back," she says, when Will hints at this; "shopping and sight-seeing are very tiring things. Mrs. Tressilian has taken us to the theatre twice; Mrs. Chichester likes it, and so Guy thinks we ought to go."

Mr. Chichester took Will aside before their visit was over. "We have been to the oculist," he says. "After all, it is a simple cataract; the pain was merely a little local inflammation; she has caught cold, he says. But there is no doubt that it has made great progress; she can scarcely see at all—less than we thought. Mr. Paget thinks that in a few months both eyes will be ready for couching."

If Mrs. Chichester be more blind, Will thinks, she has never looked more cheerful. The most perfect understanding seemed to prevail between the three. Guy's manners were denuded of their little roughnesses; Mrs. Chichester turned her face oftenest to her son; but she seemed to depend most on Honor. It was Honor who laid aside her wraps, smoothed out the soft curls, and hovered round her with a thousand nameless attentions; Honor who sat beside her, and talked to her while the others discussed some parish news; Honor who seemed to anticipate every want before it could be named.

Did Guy notice this devotion? Will saw him watching them once, while he was detailing a new scheme of the vicar's; something soft and luminous came into Guy's eyes, and then the two men looked at each other.

They had no need to speak. "Can any one be like her? Am I not blessed beyond my deserts?" Guy's eyes seemed to say; and Will smiled an assent.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AMONG THE FIR-TREES.

THE spring sunshine was flooding the low meadows beside the Nidd when Guy Chichester brought his mother back to Ingleside, and Honor went home to the Cottage to gladden her brother's heart for a few days before her bright smile and kindly presence vanished from his hearth forever.

Who can imagine the joy with which honest Humphrey welcomed back his Duchess? His pleasure was outspoken, very different from the shy greeting Dym bestowed on her friends.

"I have enjoyed my visit, but it is pleasant to be home again," observed Mrs. Chichester, in the cosy confidential half-hour before dinner, when she and Dym were alone together. The little dainty tea-equipage was beside them; Dym sat on a low chair, leaning forward till her face almost touched Mrs. Chichester's lap; she wore her white dress, with a little breast-knot of violets and ferns; the porch window stood open, and the lowing of cattle came over the dewy meadows. Nature was undergoing its annual revival: trees were bursting into new life, tender green shoots were unfolding, little wayside flowers struggled into existence; everywhere there were buds, brightness, a sense of growing vigor and strength; white lambs, uncouth calves, yellow ducklings; the earth was full of young things; every nest was crowded with bright-eyed clamorous creatures, with open beaks and downy breasts and unfledged fluttering wings.

With spring comes restlessness. Why is it, I wonder? The blood courses more quickly through the veins as the new sap stirs under the woody heart of elms and beeches. Do we

throw out new shoots, too? Do we unfold fresh leaves and quiver into new life? Whence proceed those strange stirrings, those vague yearnings, those odd pulsations and moods of feeling? Is Nature reproaching us for our sluggishness? Is it for this reason that she is preaching her sweet revivals in a thousand different utterances—in blades of grass, in bird-songs, in green hedge-rows? Under her influence plodding natures wake into sudden ambitions; prosaic natures break into spasms and snatches of poetry; contented home-staying natures rouse restless and suddenly tire of their narrow confines. "Over the hills and far away," what is the great unknown world doing? There is the scent of far-off spices in the air; the sun rises and sets on fair tracts of country, on lakes and rivers and mountains, on rolling prairies and vast cities. How many of us would go forth, I wonder, as the prince in the fairy tale, led by this same restless spirit? What is the good of delving and toiling and spinning? Where are the enchanted shoes? Bring forth the cap of darkness.

The village is asleep; the martins are twittering and fluttering in the eaves; the pigeons are tumbling and cooing in the red sunshine; a meek-faced sheep, feeding on the short sweet herbage, starts aside in a fright as we pass. Are we really sober middle-aged men and women? Are there aches, pains, rags, and broken hearts? Let us come out of the sunshine, and bring our dreams with us—our work will be all the sweeter for them. Through all the thousand years that the old earth has lasted, men have stretched out their hands and rejoiced in the spring. "For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear in the land, and the time of the singing of birds is come." How fair must have been those spring days in the Holy Land!

This restlessness had come to Dym—a great quaver of discontent and longing. The beautiful ideal life, where was it? Beyond those golden-edged clouds, perhaps, folded away somewhere in those dim blue skies. She listens with an odd pathos of silence as Mrs. Chichester weaves a gay little web of talk. How bright, how incongruous it sounds to Dym! Picture-galleries, theatres, and bales of velvet and silks. "It was the prettiest shopping in the world; and then Guy used to take us to the parks—people turned round to look at him and Honor as they walked; but I don't think Honor noticed it,"

prattled on Mrs. Chichester, innocently. Then and afterwards she was never weary of descanting on Honor's rare beauty, her merits and lovableness. Did Dym secretly take herself to task for that secret sting of pain with which she listened to these descriptions? She brooded over them sadly, and with a little envy, afterwards. How she had hated those green parks, when she had walked in them with only Edith as her companion! The glittering Serpentine, the long Row, the dazzling line of carriages and equestrians—what a shifting phantasmagoria it had seemed, of faces and sunshine, and horses and dusty chariots! How different it must have looked to those two! Honor's serene eyes would have a pleasant puzzled expression in them; now and then she would send out curious flashes of inquiry and amusement into the unknown world before her, all the while she moved so stately and erect beside her lover. Dym could fancy the sarcasm with which Guy would hail some odd study of character, as he lounged indolently under the green trees; his quips and jests, his half-serious raillery against Vanity Fair, its foibles and weaknesses, and his secret pride as men looked at the beautiful woman beside him.

With all his sarcastic speeches, Honor wearied of it sooner than he did. She used to be glad when, in the cool of the evening, they drove back to the old Kensington house. The half studio, half drawing-room would be very restful after the day's bustle and sunshine. Dym could imagine her coming down in her white gown, with calm, satisfied eyes, to talk and sing to them. I suppose the lovers had most of it to themselves, after all. Mrs. Chichester dozed a great deal. Honor would go out and walk with Guy on the lawn under the cedar-tree; the bell from some neighboring church would ring out for evening service; on the other side of the ivied walls another pair of lovers would be whispering; a tall poplar waved; now and then a few sleepy bird-notes came from under the red eaves; a few stars peeped out. What wonderful low-toned talks they had in that old garden! talks whose sweetness healed the pain of years, and lit the future with radiance.

Dym's face still wore its odd wistful expression, when Guy came and laughingly scolded them for unsociability. As he took his mother down the low broad stairs, he gave his other

hand to Dym. Happiness was making him more than usually beneficent; the keen eyes looked at her with grave kindness as they took their places at the table.

"When do you mean to be your old self again, Miss Elliott?" he asked; but there was something reproachful in his tone.

Dym flushed up a little—perhaps she wondered what he meant. She was well enough, and strong—quite strong, she assured him. But Guy thought the unsmiling dark eyes had a strange heaviness in them.

"Illuminations are always prepared for illustrious visitors; you have not lit up yours, Miss Elliott; you are too much like your name." It was the old kind quizzing, but Dym winced under it. By and by his tone changed, as he bade her fetch some parcel from the library. "You must send her out more, mother; she is getting too grave and quiet. This illness has quite altered her," he said, when Dym had disappeared on her errand.

Dym was not a bit grave when she came back; she was in a rosy flush to her fingers' ends. They had not forgotten her, then, these kind friends; from their own overflowing feast of happiness they had spared a few crumbs to the young dependant. Dym's eyes could sparkle now. Something very nearly approaching to tears shone in them as the knots gave way and revealed the soft folds of silk, with a little satin-lined morocco box reposing on it.

Dym had hardly patience to look at the beautiful violet dress Mrs. Chichester had so thoughtfully provided for her, with the fine embroidered handkerchief and dainty lace ruffles, so great was her eagerness to explore the contents of the tiny box. She knew almost before she opened it who was the unknown giver. If Guy had wished to give pleasure, he had fully succeeded. Dym gave a little gasp of surprise and admiration as the dead-gold locket, with its delicate filigree chain, came to view. "From her friends, Honor Nethecote and Guy Chichester," was the penciled inscription. There were Honor's eyes smiling at her inside, and a plait of the ruddy brown hair.

"Honor thought you would like it best. Is it your taste? is it pretty enough, eh?" Dym gave him her hand, almost too overwhelmed to speak; but her eyes must have thanked

him. "We shall have the illumination after all; you have mounted two red flags already," said Guy, comically, as he smiled at her.

What a little it had cost him! Honor and he had selected it from a host of shining toys at the end of a day's shopping. "Better take the one with the diamond star, sir," the civil shopman had said to him; "it is dearer, but it is more worth the money, and the lady will like it better." "My good fellow." responded Guy, drolly, "there are ladies and ladies. Some have to do without diamond stars, and be content with plain chasing; we will take the larger one of dead gold, please."

"I suppose you will want to thank Honor for this. Get your hat and something warm, and I will take you over to the Cottage."

Dym flew to get ready. How long was it since she had walked with him! She kissed the locket as she put it on. How it glittered and shone in the twilight. She ran down the terrace, led by the tiny red glow of a cigar in the distance. Kelpie bounded towards her, barking with delight.

"How cool these spring evenings are! Do you mind my cigar? How have you and old Humphrey been getting on, Miss Elliott?"

Dym did not want to talk about Humphrey Nethecote; she dismissed the subject with a hasty word. There was the moonlight streaming on the field-path, and the old trysting-stile. "So-ho, my little lady, Humphrey is not good enough for you, eh?" thought Guy; and his keen eyes scrutinized the little figure at his side in the dainty white dress, with the scarlet hood drawn coquettishly over the bright hair.

Dym's face grew wistful again as they walked on silently. There was the stone fence where she had met with her accident. Was it years or months ago since she had lain there, with Cerberus browsing on the scanty herbage on the other side of the wall? Involuntarily she shivered, as though she felt the cold slush and snow again, the sweeping night-winds, and the sickening crushing pain of her poor foot.

"Are you cold?—ah, now I remember. Don't you know, my child, we should never recall sad things? Give me your hand; here are the steps in the wall."

Did Guy's kind heart detect the trembling and coldness, that he kept it in his own for so long, and then placed it quietly

within his arm as he talked to her cheerfully about the happy days he trusted would be in store for all of them?

"I shall leave my mother in your care. It is a sacred charge, Miss Elliott, and I know it will be faithfully fulfilled. When the autumn brings us back again I shall find you here?"

His tone was interrogative.

"Yes; that is, if you and Miss Nethecote wish it, Mr. Chichester."

"Honor would wish to keep you altogether, but it appears your brother has settled it otherwise."

"Will thinks I ought to go."

"Will Clericus has a few stubborn notions of his own, on which I should like to set my heel. I am not quite sure his views are sound; he is too strongly impregnated with the doctrine of works. When people go in for being saints, I always mistrust them."

"Mr. Chichester!" broke in the little sister, indignantly.

"Don't disturb yourself; he has not taken to shaving his head or wearing sandals yet, only the air of St. Luke's is getting too rarefied for me. I breathe better in a more murky atmosphere."

But Dym would not see the joke.

"I wish there were more like him," she returned, rather soberly.

"Well, I believe you are right," was the candid answer. "But to return to our vexed question. I shall be heartily sorry if you have to leave us, Miss Elliott."

"Thank you. You do not know how much good it does me to hear you say so, Mr. Chichester," faltered poor Dym.

"Why, you knew that before, didn't you?" in a tone of surprise. "Well, I suppose it is only in human nature that I should feel grateful to Honor for wishing to take this work on herself. She knows what I think of it."

"She has wished it all along. I think she is right," said Dym, honestly.

"It is like her goodness," his voice breaking a little with earnestness: "you and I know what that is, Miss Elliott. I am only afraid whether this attention to my mother will not tie her too much;" and, under his breath, "I shall want my wife to myself."

"I do not think she will feel it so," replied Dym, eagerly.

As usual, she had thrown herself heart and soul into her friends' interests. "We have talked it over. Honor is so fond of reading; she says it will be quite a delight for her to go through her favorite authors again."

"Jeremy Taylor, to wit. I fancy Honor is a little bitten with him too." Then, with a touch of his old drollery, "It is a bore when one's future wife has High-Church proclivities. Well, the Thousand and One Tales are right enough; but how about the thousand and one letters?"

"We thought," returned Dym, modestly—"that is, I thought, and Honor approved—that Phyllis writes so well, has so pretty a hand-writing, that I am sure she would satisfy Mrs. Chichester. Phyllis is so neat-handed, and has such pleasant ways with her," finished Dym, in the quiet old-fashioned manner that had grown on her lately; but there was a possible hint of heart-break in her voice all the same. It is hard for all of us to delegate a dearly-loved duty to another.

"Somebody else has pleasant ways with her," thought Guy. Did he understand the girl's grief and despair at the thought of leaving them? The little hand that lay like a feather's weight on his arm trembled still. Perhaps he longed to quiet it; perhaps, in the heaven of his own content, he desired to drop another crumb of comfort into the lap of the little creature whom Fate had brought into the store-house of his bounty. Anyhow, as he looked at her, there came into Guy Chichester's eyes—generally so keen and quizzical—a certain warm luminous light, a look that none but those whom he loved and trusted ever won from him.

"I must have a talk with Phyllis; she is a faithful satellite of your own, Miss Elliott. Well, it is a kind thought, and I thank you for it. One of these days I hope you will ask me to do something for you in return."

"I am too deeply grateful already. I would not make the burden heavier," stammered Dym.

"Pooh!—nonsense," he returned, hastily; and then, relapsing again into his kind tone, "Remember, if you are in any trouble or any perplexity you have given me the right to help you."

"I—how do you mean, Mr. Chichester?"

"Are you not my good little friend? shall I not always hold

you as such? and do not friends help each other? It is not my nature to be fickle, Miss Elliott; and I know wherever you are you will always be faithful to me and mine."

"Faithful to him and his." In the years to come Dymphna Elliott nobly fulfilled those words; when Guy Chichester reaped a rich harvest of the few kindly words and deeds that the man in his generosity had scattered broadcast into the furrows of a simple girl's heart.

"Sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand." It costs nothing to speak a few kindly words, to drop a little speech of sympathy and encouragement here and there—words which the birds of the air may carry away, perhaps, but will leave us none the poorer; deeds which will take root and spring forth into goodly fruit.

Why are our harvest-fields, then, so bare, and the garners of our benevolence so empty? After all, there is deep meaning in the fairy-tale. Even now there are some lips which are forever opening and dropping roses and pearls and diamonds. The princess may be poorly clad, she may have homely features, she may not have drawn a prize in this world's lottery; but if she have gentle tones for children, loving words of sympathy for the sick and aged, if her mouth open for kindly smiles, for tender speeches of consolation, she has the gift, though no aged fairy has given it to her; and her diamonds have the true lustre, though they may not shine in this world.

Guy dropped Dym's hand hastily from his arm as they came to the patch of moonlight road before the cottage. There was Honor waiting for him with her lace shawl drawn over her head, and Humphrey in his straw hat beside her.

There was a warm embrace between her and Dym, and a few whispered words of thanks and greetings, and then Guy eagerly claimed her.

How tranquil and still the little garden looked this evening! —a shimmer of pink-and-white apple-blossoms, of moonlight and white paths together; the orchard was a glittering bridal bouquet of blossoms; the trickling of the little beck in the dell was plainly audible; there was a sweet scent of hawthorn and lilac in the air; now and then came a distant bleat from a stray sheep on the common.

"How peaceful it all is! there is quite a story-book feeling about it, isn't there?" says Humphrey, with a grotesque glim-

mering after something undefinable and poetical: if he could have expressed it, there would have been a whole idyl of tender sentiment in his heart to-night—to see Dym in her white dress walking down those shining paths beside him, to put back the low branches and overhanging hedge-rows that not a fold of her dainty raiment might be disturbed, to blunder out his honest confidence about the loneliness of his home when his Duchess left it, and his unselfish delight in her happiness—all this was bliss to Humphrey.

I wonder whether Dym heard it all, and with what sort of feverish impatience she listened now and then. She returned half-comprehending answers; she was a little *distraite* and absent. Before her there were two figures; their heads seemed touched with glory. Presently they crossed into a belt of shadow; Guy's face was in shade, but Honor's was still touched with light. By and by there was a sudden turn in the path, and they passed out of her sight.

The afternoon after her return to Nidderdale Cottage Honor went over to Woodside. There only wanted three days to the wedding, and womanly hands and brains were full of a hundred arrangements. Dym was installed at the Cottage with orders to make herself useful in every possible way, so there she and Honor had been all the morning, sorting and labeling gifts for the school-children. Honor was going down in state to the school the next day to deliver them in person and take leave of her scholars; and afterwards there were her poor people to visit, and humble friends dwelling in outlying cottages on the edges of the moor; and this with Guy claiming every minute of her time, and proposing impossible rides and drives to all kinds of improbable places.

Dym could not help admiring the gentle tact with which she managed to evade his demands. "Give me these three days, dear Guy; I owe them to my friends; afterwards my time will belong to you," she said, with so charming a smile that Mr. Chichester forgot to grumble for full five minutes afterwards.

So Honor went down to Woodside, leaving Dym hard at work in the little room looking over the orchard and trout-stream; and there Mr. Chichester spent a long afternoon, walking up and down under the sunny walls, chewing the cud of discontent and anticipation together, and occasionally stop-

ping to address some railing observation on the contrary ways of women through the open window, for Dym's benefit.

At the garden-gate Honor came upon Dr. Grey himself.

"The very person I was wanting to see," he exclaimed, as they shook hands. Dr. Grey was looking thin and careworn; there were fresh lines on the forehead that Dym had once pronounced noble-looking; the hair had worn off still more; he was an anxious middle-aged man now.

Rupert came down the garden path, shouting at the sight of his friend; his father, however, quietly told him to go back, and the little fellow slunk sorrowfully away; but Honor noticed the sad gentleness with which he spoke to his boy, so different from his old irritable manner.

"I sent Rupert in because I wanted to speak to you, Miss Nethecote. Esther is asleep. Shall we take a turn in the fir-wood?" And as Honor signified her assent, they climbed up the steep little lawn and went through the gate into the scented dusk that lay behind it.

How fragrant those pines were that afternoon! how crisply the dead bracken of last year, with its fresh young spikes shooting through, yielded to their footsteps! what a delicious green gloom pervaded the little wooded hill! Dr. Grey walked up the ascent with his hands behind him and his eyes fixed thoughtfully on the ground. He roused himself by and by to make a few professional inquiries after Honor's health, and when these were satisfied, and a congratulatory word or two had been spoken, he came to the subject he had on his mind.

"Do you remember a few words you spoke to me last summer, Miss Nethecote, when you told me to find out what was the matter with Esther?"

"I am afraid I took a great liberty with you, Dr. Grey," she rejoined, with her frank blush. "I am very outspoken with my friends."

"I am glad you count us among them. My poor wife, as you know, is devoted to you. You have cured me of my skepticism on the subject of women's friendship," he went on, with a faint smile. "Do you remember our long arguments last summer?"

"We shall have a great many more, I hope," returned Honor, heartily.

Dr. Grey shook his head. "I never look far into the future.

That was the kindest word you ever spoke to me: it opened my eyes to the state Esther was in."

"Well?" interrupted Honor, breathlessly.

"I had grown so used to her invalid ways, it was so sore a truth to me that Esther could never be the active woman that I longed to see her, that I believe I closed my eyes willfully to the discomfort of her position."

"I am afraid you did," replied Honor, very gravely.

"One grows callous and unfeeling sometimes. Doctors have a hard life of it; and it is sad work when there is always an invalid at their own hearth. There were times, I grant it, when I pitied myself more than her, when I believed her capable of greater effort, when I grew impatient at the weakness of her will."

"But you own now you were wrong, Dr. Grey."

"I own it with the deepest grief and remorse. You are Esther's friend; you judged her more generously. I see she has no longer the power to make these efforts."

"Not for the last few months; she has grown worse lately."

"True; your words opened my eyes to the extent of the mischief—I wish I could say it had not then begun—a week or two earlier; but no, it would not have helped us."

"You frighten me, Dr. Grey. I hope there is nothing radically wrong with Esther."

"You must not blame me entirely if there is," he returned. with a smile so sad that she could not but choose to forgive him. "Esther did not complain, and I was desperately hard worked just then. Typhoid fever had broken out in the cottages lower down, and for some nights I could scarcely snatch a minute's sleep; it was just then that you took alarm."

"I thought she looked very ill, and that there was something wrong; she always seemed to me the sort of woman who might go into a decline if she were not watched. Is it that?" looking anxiously up into his sorrowful face.

"I wish it were! I wish my poor Esther could be saved in that way from even a portion of the suffering I fear for her!" He paused, as though from emotion, and then hurried on. "I was a little taken aback by what you said to me, and I resolved on watching her narrowly. Soon I had an uneasy conviction that things were even worse than I thought: in a few weeks these fears were verified."

Honor gave a low exclamation, but he went on without heeding her.

"I was desirous of having my treatment confirmed, and it was impossible to call in further advice without alarming Esther. She was very nervous about herself already. This difficulty was solved by an old friend, a London physician, coming to see me on his way to Scotland."

"What a relief it must have been to you!"

"To have my treatment confirmed—you are right; there is not another man's opinion I could rely on more fully. It was Dr. Guthrie who ventured on breaking the truth to Esther. I had grown cowardly over it all, and was for deferring it." And then in a few brief words he explained to Honor the exact nature of the cruel malady that had already fixed its fangs so deeply in the poor invalid.

William Elliott was not wrong when he read Honor's great pitying heart so truly. Honor covered up her face and wept the bitterest tears when she heard her friend's doom pronounced by her husband's lips; the sunshine seemed to have died out among the green gloom; the golden motes ceased to play between the mast-like stems of the firs. Good God, what a pitiful thing is this life, after all! what strange inequalities of fate! what unanswered questions of lives! what meek martyrdoms; what cloudy skies for some! what great dazzling noontides for others!

Here was one woman looking half dazzled into a vista of happiness, watching the days go by with a certain sweet dizziness, knowing she will spend them beside the man she loves. Here is another, scarcely older than she, whose suns have already faded, whose life has been lived; who knows that slow and secret anguish and increasing torture await her: to whom death will come as a relief, the grave as her only rest.

Those tears fall refreshingly on the dry bitter pain that is in the man's heart. After all, has he been so much to blame? A little thoughtlessness, a little neglect, a secret mischief working without sign; suffering bravely borne without complaint; a woman's color fading; a fragile body unconscious of its own decay.

"How did she bear it?" asked Honor, drying her eyes.

"Like an angel," answered the poor husband, with a groan. "You would hardly believe how much she is changed, Miss

Nethecote. No fretfulness, no worrying now; only anxiety for me and the children. She will be awake and expecting you now. I ought not to detain you any longer."

Honor gave him her hand without speaking. What was there to say? Our friends go down into the furnace, but the flames, scorching as they are, do not consume us as they did the Chaldean officers. The man had his bitter potion allotted to him, and he knew it. Long ago his wife had ceased to be to him the wife of which he had dreamed in his earlier years. She was beautiful and amiable, but she had wearied his soul with a daily weariness; she had dragged him down, till his vexation had wellnigh destroyed the harmony of their lives. Why had he not borne more patiently with her? He loved her—he knew it now—in spite of all her faults; why had he not seen the burden of her work was too heavy for her? A hundred times lately he had recalled instances of her gentleness and wish to please him. With all her fretfulness, had she ever spoken an angry word to him? Was she not the tenderest mother, the most loving in spite of her helplessness?

These were the questions Dr. Grey was ever asking himself as he went to and fro on his errands of healing. They kept him for a long time pacing the fir-woods after Honor had left him in search of her friend.

"Has Edward told you?" was Esther's first question as Honor entered the shady little parlor. The poor face was thinner and more faded since she had seen it last; the brown eyes had a dull, heavy look in them; there were silver threads running through the soft hair.

Honor's face must have answered her, for the poor thing shivered as she hid her face on Honor's arm. The baby lay asleep in its old-fashioned cradle, the other children were shouting and playing in the sunny front garden. Harry's solemn face and curls were seen through a vista of lilacs; there was the basket heaped up with little shirts and socks; the small table strewn with account-books and other articles of housewifery. These things had an unconscious pathos in them. The mother would not lay down her work till she was obliged. Do some women work on the rack, I wonder?

"Harry wants new socks," says Esther, pointing to them with tears in her eyes. Was there inconsistency in her speech —suffering and baby's socks—living wants blending with

the shadow of approaching death? A mother working contentedly in her pain, and listening to the children outside, and wondering how soon they would put on their little black frocks, and if Hannah would be kind to them, and what Edward would do without her.

Esther's patient eyes filled up with tears whenever she spoke of her husband and children. Little things had made her fretful, but in the hour of her trial there was no lack of fortitude. The poor weak creature had fallen back on her Christianity in her trouble, and found it all-powerful to help her. Her sadness was too deeply rooted for mere surface-comfort. She was full of pity for her husband, but she put by all Honor's well-meant efforts of consolation.

"Of course it is very dreadful—the pain, I mean—but I have to bear it; he is so good and kind, I try not to make it worse for him; it is so bad when it comes on in the night, and he can get no rest"

Honor ventured on a suggestion. Humphrey liked children; in a few days Nidderdale Cottage would be almost empty. Could not Rupert and Edgar, and perhaps Amy, go there for a little while? She was almost sorry she proposed it when she saw a cloud of sadness come over the poor mother's face.

"You are very kind, but I can hardly spare Amy, she is so useful, and is quite a little mother to the others; and Rupert—oh, no," and here Esther's voice grew sharp with pain, "do not take away my children; they are so good, and I shall only have them for a little while longer."

"I only thought Hannah might be more at liberty to attend to you. Do not trouble yourself about it; we must think of some other way of helping you."

"Dear Honor, it is not necessary. I will not have you sadden your happiness with thoughts of me. Look here, what I have worked for the bride." And she drew from her pillow a little quilted satin glove-case. "It is a poor gift, dear, but I know you will value it for my sake." And then, as though the contrast between them saddened her, in spite of her efforts to smile, she burst into tears and threw her arms round Honor's neck, and whispered that her poor Esther would love her, and pray for her, and that she was not to fret when the news came, for if it were not for Edward she would be glad to go and have done with it all.

How sadly Honor walked back to the Cottage! Guy was sitting on a sunny bench on the edge of the common, and sprang up with a half-jesting reproval on his lips as she came towards him. It died away as he caught sight of her tired face.

"My darling, what have you been doing with yourself?" he exclaimed, drawing her down beside him.

"Oh, Guy, if I were ever to leave you as poor Esther is leaving her husband!" And Honor leaned her face wearily against his shoulder, as though her rest were there.

"Are things so bad at Woodside as all that?" he replied, in a shocked voice. "Poor woman! I am sorry they have told you. Why, love, this is a poor welcome!" as Honor, spent with excitement, shed a few more nervous tears. "You must not let even a passing sadness come between us now. I cannot bear to see your bright face dimmed for a moment."

"Talk to me, then, and help me to forget it," she replied, with the saddest, sweetest smile. "Sometimes my happiness makes me afraid; it seems almost too perfect for earth."

"Do you know what that tells me?" he returned, with one of his brightest looks. A secret thrill crossed him as this proud, beautiful creature crept closer to him for protection from her own loving doubts.

The sunshine streamed down on the yellow gorse and broom, only the bracken at their feet lay in shadow; the birds were singing from a clump of firs lower down the road; the white geese came waddling over the common; up in the sky a lark was caroling; in the west a mass of white clouds, tinged with gold and crimson, struggled in the blue like a phantom ship on fire; near home the flecks of foam and whiteness resembled flocks of strange birds; the evening air was sweet with the breath of May. How could any sadness long resist such influences?

"Is the cloud gone?" he inquired, presently. Need he have asked? was he not beside her? was not his voice in her ears?

"Now we will go home," she said, reaching out her hand. No wonder, as she smiled at him, that Guy was dazzled at the brightness of her answer.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"WOOED, AND MARRIED AND A'."

THERE is no sight prettier than a village wedding—I mean, a wedding in a village.

We all know the conventional St. George's, Hanover Square, sort of wedding; the great sombre church filled with gaping spectators, three-fourths of them strangers to the bride and bridegroom; the usual crowd collected outside; the fortunate policeman whose beat it is; the nursemaids; the barefooted Arabs, the London *gamins* of the streets; there is the everlasting yellow chariot, the gray horses, the postilions in their red satin waistcoats; the favors; the fuss; the pretty smiling bridesmaids; the never-to-be-done-with pomp and pageantry of a nineteenth-century English wedding.

Inside the crowd is larger; the sun streams through the great painted windows on a motley of shifting colors; the sacred places are invested by well-dressed people, who on another day in the week would have remained penned up in their luxurious pews, but who now crowd the chancel. There are hand-shakings and introductions, whispered jests, fluttering fans. By and by the ceremony goes on—that most awful ceremony except one—speaking of responsibilities, of duties, of vows, that are life-long. Who among them listens? The mother and sisters shed a few tears, perhaps; the bridesmaids are more ready to titter; most of them have been brought up in devout habits, yet few kneel; presently the benediction is spoken; the man and wife go out together hand in hand, the bride's head a little bowed perhaps; the baskets of favors go round; the horses paw the ground; the carriages roll away one by one; the by-standers criticise the dresses, the bride's looks, the red hair of the bridegroom; the younger ones huzza a little. It is all over; it has been a goodly show. But who is there among all those spectators who prayed that He who blessed the marriage in Cana of Galilee may strengthen the hands of the pair who are going out to fight the battle of life together?

It is not that people are more devout in the country, but that the accessories are brighter. In lieu of London streets we have green fields and deep-hanging lanes. The bells peal out or tinkle merrily from the little church; the young people of the village assemble in the porch, or line the churchyard; the babies are tumbling over the graves, and come up with their hands full of daisies. One or two old men, in their white smocks, lean on the low lichen-covered wall. There comes the modest procession: there is the bride, God bless her! Off go the poor old hats; the school-children curtsy; the straw bonnets are full of homely flowers. By and by, when the young wife reappears on her husband's arm, she will tread lightly on gillyflowers and pinks and old-fashioned stocks—how sweet the air is with them! The organ is playing out the "Wedding March;" the bridesmaids come down in their crisp muslins; there are fresh curtsies; the babies coo and clap their dimpled hands; Giles Stodge's bleared eyes clear a little. Blue skies, green fields, a little crispness and freshness, a few flowers, a few kindly prayers and words, greater loving-kindness, and gratitude for a great happiness—these are all that are needed for wedding garments.

It was this sort of wedding that Guy and Honor had planned for themselves. Birstwith was a very primitive place; the lord of the manor had rights that were almost feudal; the squire's harvest must be carried, let who will suffer; in the sheep-shearing seasons the farmers must wait till the Chichester sheep were denuded of their wool and crowded the home-fields with shining white bodies.

Between the Great House and the village there was a hearty reciprocity of interest and good will. The masters of Ingleside came of a wealthy stock, but the love of home was deeply bred in them. Guy Chichester was the only rover; his father and his father's father had dwelt as patriarchs among patriarchs—fattening up calves, breeding colts, very great in the hunting-fields, stern as to the preservation of game, and merciful in their capacity of magistrates to all offenders except poachers. Guy, in spite of his roving propensities, was a greater favorite than his father had been. Mr. Fortescue complained that the kitchens of Ingleside were turning his people into paupers: in the winter, bales of flannel and hundreds of quarts of soup found their way into the laborers' cottages.

Guy was forever bringing in people—tramps and worn-out gleaners, hungry mothers and children—to enjoy a plentiful meal. Sometimes, after church on Sunday, there would be a row of the old people of the village—aged men and women from the parish union—sitting round one of the clean-scoured tables in the servants' hall, waiting for the invariable beef and plum-pudding.

That the squire should do something handsome on his wedding-day was as fully expected as that the bells should ring on Sunday. Long beforehand it was settled no work should be done in the village. The people were all dressed in their best and standing at their doors, as though sowing and plowing and delving were unheard-of things. A few of the able-bodied men were away on necessary work, but even they would be back in time for the feast. In the long green field beside the church the white tents were up, and the red and blue flags were straining and flapping in the breeze. There was to be roast beef and plum-pudding for young and old, a cask of cider had been provided, and some of the rare Yorkshire ale too; and the miller was to take the chair; and Guy meant to leave his guests and come down for a parting cheer, before the traveling-carriage took him and Honor away.

But, in spite of the festivity of the village, the cloudless day, and the bridegroom's radiant face, Beatrix Delaire declared the whole wedding a very poor affair, and decidedly rustic.

Guy had plentifully provided for his poorer neighbors, but he had bidden very few of his richer ones to the wedding. Both he and Honor were painfully unconventional in their notions, as Beatrix phrased it. Neither of them wished to mar the sacredness of the day with admitting all kinds of non-descript outsiders. Beatrix and her husband, Mrs. Tressilian and Edith, and the Fortescues and the Trevors, were the only guests. William Elliott married them—drawn away again reluctantly from St. Luke's by their urgent entreaties; Cousin Latimer assisted, but it was Will who pronounced the nuptial blessing, who placed Honor's hand within her husband's, whose cordial congratulations were the first that greeted the newly-wedded pair.

One thing grievously offended Mrs. Delaire: Honor had no bridesmaids; she walked up the aisle leaning on her brother's arm, and, as she came into sight, Guy left his place to meet

her; and when they reached the altar, the two knelt down together, hand in hand, till the officiating priest was ready. There was not one among the guests who did not long remember that day, and the grave, beautiful face of the bride, as her clear voice repeated the solemn words, "till death us do part." Was it fancy, or did she turn pale and tremble slightly? Dym did not notice it, for suddenly the sun broke dazzling from behind a cloud, and streamed down over the chancel pavement, tinging Honor's dress with crimson and violet; and, looking up, she saw Will's head surrounded by its golden glory, and his face "was as the face of an angel."

What a dream and unreality that day was to Dym! The great glittering table, where, through a vista of *épergnes* and pyramids of flowers, she caught sight of Honor's queenly head, and Mr. Chichester's bearded face beside it. She held fast by Will's side, with a very humble child's face, all that day; she was feeling dimly after some great beautiful truth that she only half understood. How improbable—how altogether impossible—it seemed that any one should love her as Guy loved Honor! She was peeping—poor little soul!—into some wonderful woman's paradise, full of all manner of golden fruit and dazzling things. Would she ever be permitted to enter? Were there only a few privileged to know such happiness? Were there others outside, lonely and forgotten as she was?

Poor ignorant little Dym, crying out for the moon, conscious of strange wants, wishing to be something to somebody, and all the while Humphrey was longing to take her to his great honest heart and show her all its treasures—heavy gold that did not glitter, priceless jewels in rugged settings, stainless honor and integrity, and a wealth of love that would give of its substance, asking for little in return!

Dym shrank away from Humphrey, and placed herself under Will's wing—Will, who took such care of her, though he ate nothing himself—Will, whose manly speech, when they pledged him afterwards, touched every heart, and even drew tears from the bride's happy eyes. Honor did not wait for any more speeches after that; when Will had finished, she took her mother-in-law's hand and led her from the room. Guy and she were with her for a long time. When the others thought Honor was changing her dress, Dym, coming in to hurry them,

found her, still kneeling in her bride's dress, with her hand clasped in Mrs. Chichester's, and Guy standing beside them.

"Do not be long, my wife," whispered Guy, leading Honor to the door. But there was no need to hasten her; in a marvelously short time she returned, before Guy had got back from the field that was still ringing with the cheers.

He came in, looking pleased and excited.

"Good-by, Dym," were Honor's parting words as she pressed the girl fervently to her. "This day has linked us together more than ever. One day, dear, may you be as happy as I am!"

"I leave you a precious legacy, Miss Elliott," said Mr. Chichester, as he came up to shake hands with her. "Take care of my mother, and God bless you! You know I shall never forget my little friend."

But it was at Mrs. Chichester's side that Honor tarried longest.

"Good-by, mother; you are mine as well as Guy's now. Do not be lonely without us." And people marveled at the long silent embrace that followed.

The guests and servants were all on the terrace, and some of the younger ones threw garlands into the carriage as it rolled off. Will stooped down and picked up one that lay at his feet: it was a green rowan spray.

Will took the night mail up to London that same evening; not even Dym's entreaties could induce him to defer his departure to the next day.

"My dear child, I must go," he returned, quite gently; but when Will spoke in that tone she knew he meant to keep his word. Dym went back to the great brilliant drawing-room, where Beatrix was playing on the grand piano, and Mrs. Chichester, with tired face and unsteady lips, was listening to her sister's dreary platitudes. Mrs. Fortescue, in an elegant pose, was talking London gossip with Colonel Delaire, and her husband was playing spillikins with Edith.

How empty the room seemed! what vacuum! what dreariness! How she missed the tall restless figure that always perambulated it at this time in the evening, or harangued them from the rug! How mercilessly he used to quiz her! what drollery, what covert sarcasms spoke in every tone of his voice! He could make them laugh, but he could be eloquent too.

There were times when Mrs. Chichester and she would

hush their very breath as they listened to him. What grand thoughts, what a vast comprehensive grasp of mind he had! sometimes his voice would change and tremble with the very greatness of his subject; then all at once he would be silent; Dym wandering in the corridors afterwards would hear weird music, suffering, passionate, drawn into strange chords and thrills of sound, reverberating through the room till Kelpie howled a protest, and came up fawning to his master, to coax him to a midnight ramble through the sleeping village.

But Kelpie had gone with his master, and it would be long before Ingleside would welcome their return. We all know the vacuum after a great excitement; the lights have gone out at the feast, our friends have departed; far away they may be thinking of us, but we are sitting lonely and sad without them; this morning they were with us, we pressed their hands and bade God speed them, and now they are gone.

Life is full of these wearinesses, these disgusts; when our days lose their flavor, and are nothing but minutes and hours; with some of us it is like Mariana in her moated grange:

> "Old faces glimmered through the doors,
> Old footsteps trod the upper floors,
> Old voices called her from without."

The very silence has a voice within it; we hear our friends though not a word is spoken.

Humphrey looked across the room very longingly for some time before he ventured to approach the corner where Dym had ensconced herself.

It was by the open window, for the evening was mild. Dym had a book before her, but her eyes were looking out on the moonlighted terraces; her face had a sorrowful, wistful expression. Humphrey thought evidently his presence disturbed her, for a gleam of impatience crossed her face.

"Are you going, Mr. Nethecote?"

"Not just yet," he replied, sitting down beside her. Humphrey was short-sighted, and his chair got entangled with the violet silk. Dym reproved him with a little sharpness as she freed herself.

"I am afraid I am very clumsy," said poor Humphrey, apologetically. It was almost painful to see how humble he

would be with this girl; the more capricious and uncertain she was, the gentler he would be with her. Humphrey was always being punished for her unsatisfactory moods, though the truth must be owned he often stumbled upon them with a singular want of tact. Humphrey would not see when he was not wanted; he would come up with his honest face and jest just at the wrong moment. At times Dym would behave herself very sweetly to him; with all her humors she had an odd confidence and faith in this simple kindly friend of hers. For days together Humphrey would nourish the hope that his suit was not looked upon unfavorably. The mistake lay in Dym's perfect unconsciousness and his ignorance of it; it had never entered her head to recognize Humphrey as a lover, and Humphrey had not as yet ventured to address her.

As he sat down beside her, hardly repulsed by her ungraciousness, though a little rueful over it, a faint suspicion came into his mind that he was too rough and uncouth to be the husband of such a dainty little creature. In spite of her sullenness, Dym looked wonderfully well to-night: the rich silk and lace ruffles and the dead-gold locket became her marvelously, as she sat there with her smooth dark hair tucked behind her ears, and the troubled light shining in her eyes. She looked certainly very graceful and attractive, and other men besides Humphrey Nethecote might have felt inclined to lose their hearts to her.

"I suppose I shall have to go now," continued Humphrey. "I am putting off the evil moment as long as I can, for, though I wouldn't wish it, it is hard to go home and miss the Duchess."

Dym felt a little visiting of remorse. Here she was luxuriating in her sad thoughts, while all this time Humphrey was bravely striving after cheerfulness and hiding deep down in his heart that he sorely felt the loss of his only sister, the sweet woman-face that had made the brightness of his hearth for so many years.

There is something especially sad when a middle-aged brother or sister loses the companion of life. Now and then one hears of such cases, but it is death oftener than marriage that robs them of their domestic treasure. Humphrey was years enough older than Honor to feel a sort of fatherly love for her; he had been a boy when she was an infant in her cradle, and a youth when she was a little maiden tottering after him and calling

out to Humphie to lift her over the stepping-stone. But Honor had been his wise and cheerful companion for many years now. Without weakness, Humphrey had learned to trust her judgment and respect her decision. "Ask the Duchess; she knows more about it than I," was a frequent speech on his lips. I believe if Honor had understood such things he would have farmed his lands on her method in preference to his own. It was pleasant to see the mutual love and reverence of the brother and sister; and yet he had given her up to his friend without a selfish sigh, and was bravely setting himself to do without her.

Perhaps Humphrey's quiet manly bearing won her respect at last; perhaps, as I said before, Dym felt some visitings of remorse, for her manner changed and softened.

"It must be very dull for you. I am afraid you will miss her dreadfully," she said, trying to infuse a little interest into her tone.

Humphrey brightened up.

"These things come a little hard at first," he returned, sturdily. "Once I should have thought of doing without my right hand sooner than I'd have done without the Duchess. You see, a man grows to lean upon his womankind; with me it was 'Duchess do this, and Duchess do that' all day long."

"Poor Mr. Nethecote!" It was all Dym said, but her eyes beamed on him full of kindliness. Something seemed to tug at Humphrey's heart-strings and to take away his breath for a moment; her voice was sweet to him, and so was her pity; but if he could only make her understand that she could comfort him.

"It is not so bad as it might be," he broke out in a gruff unsteady voice. "I shall not be quite lonely when I smoke my pipe in the evening; I shall have heaps of queer thoughts to keep me company. I wonder what you would say if you knew some of them."

Dym shook her head. She was not quite sure that she cared to know many of Humphrey's thoughts. She yawned a little as Humphrey prosed on in his slow way: he noticed it at last.

"I must go away. I see I am tiring you," he said, very sadly. Dym dropped him a little curtsy and then gave him her hand; her eyes blinked at him, looking very drowsy and

pretty. "Good-by, dear," he said, patting the little hand kindly.

Dym looked after him. As the honest fellow went out, stumbling over the ottomans and footstools, a sudden color came into her cheeks. Why had he called her dear? had he forgotten? was he so very unhappy? "Poor Humphrey, we must cheer him up," she thought, as she went up to her room; and, oddly enough, she fell asleep still thinking of him.

CHAPTER XXV.

A FRAGMENT OF THE OLD, OLD STORY.

Dym was not without courage. The day after the wedding she set herself to take up her old duties again with a tolerable amount of determination and steadiness. It was dull; but life was dull, she said to herself, with a stoical shrug of the shoulders. She knew what Ingleside without Mr. Chichester was; and, though she sorely and persistently missed him every hour of the day, she resolutely banished all painful regrets, and bore herself at least with outward cheerfulness.

Perhaps Humphrey's unselfishness had taught her something; but it was certain Mr. Chichester's last words had sunk deeply into her heart. "I leave you a precious legacy," he had said to her, with one of his winning smiles; and from that moment there was something sacred to Dym in the trust reposed in her. She would prove herself worthy of it; she would show him that hers was no hireling labor; if possible, she would redouble her loving services to his mother, content if, on his return, he would reward her with one of his approving looks.

Guy Chichester had acted wisely in commending his mother to Dym's care. Dym had always been willing and affectionate, but her work had lacked enthusiasm; Guy's words had lent impetus to it. Mrs. Chichester soon felt the change in her young companion. Dym never complained of weariness now;

she read, and wrote, and stitched, with laborious zeal; she sang little Scotch ballads in the evening, or drew her low chair to Mrs. Chichester's side and beguiled a tedious hour by listening to stories of her friend's girlhood; she read Guy's and Honor's letters aloud over and over again, and kissed away the tears that sometimes stole down the mother's cheeks when any of their expressions of affection moved her more deeply than usual.

Now and then her old restless fits would return; but she never spoke of them; when the oppression became too great, she would quietly steal out of the room, and, muffling herself in her old plaid shawl, go out into the garden and shrubberics with Kiddle-a-wink. Dym had begged hard that Kiddle-a-wink might be left with her, and Humphrey had willingly agreed.

"Are you not afraid of taking cold? these spring evenings are very treacherous," Mrs. Chichester said to her once, when the girl came in, fresh and bright, to take up her work again.

"Oh, no; Kiddle-a-wink and I have had such a run," answered Dym, "down to the church porch and back again, and we met Mr. Nethecote."

Dym was always meeting Mr. Nethecote. Humphrey seemed to know intuitively the time for her rambles.

Mrs. Chichester smiled to herself, but she made no observation.

Dym seized every leisure moment for going over to Woodside; there were always two or three afternoons in the week when Mrs. Chichester did not need her; and she began regularly to go over for an hour or two and give Rupert and Edgar their Latin lessons.

The work was partly pleasure; but she had an odd feeling growing on her of late that it was better for her to be employed. A few verses by Carlyle she had read in some book haunted her, and she was ever repeating them:

"So here has been dawning
Another blue day;
Think, wilt thou let it
Slip useless away?
Out of eternity
This new day is born;
Into eternity
At night will return."

"This 'blue day' will bring nothing to me, but it may to others," she got into the habit of saying when she woke in the morning. Many people would have thought it a beautiful life: plenty of books, plenty of sunshine, a little work, piles of clever letters to read and answer, the great garden blooming with roses and lilies, the sleek horses coming round every day at the same hour, the luxurious equipage, the dainty five-o'clock tea, Dorothy coming in to warn her mistress it was time to dress, the quiet dinner, the brilliantly-lighted drawing-room. "Now read Guy's letter over again, my dear." Mrs. Chichester would kiss the thin foreign paper, with the well-known characters traced on it; but she was growing more blind every day. It would not be too much to say that she and Dym lived in those letters; Dym could almost hear Mr. Chichester's voice as she read those racy descriptions.

What wonderful glimpses they opened to her of Continental life! Sometimes it was an old Belgian town, with grand churches and grass-grown streets, where they lingered for a day or two; now it was the blue Rhine, or some great city on the banks of the Danube. With the advanced summer Guy meant to make a détour into Switzerland, and so into the Italian Tyrol; there their wanderings must cease, Guy said, with some expressions of regret; for, much as Honor wished to see Rome, she thought they ought to be home early in October. "Five months; it is a long time," sighed Mrs. Chichester; "but Guy was so bent on showing her all those places. How happy they seem, my dear! Now let us read Honor's." Honor's were always shorter than Guy's; but they were beautiful womanly letters; a sort of light seemed to reflect from them as Dym read—the pure radiance of a love that felt itself satisfied. Guy was evidently perfect in her eyes: Guy had taken such lovely old rooms, with a wooden balcony, looking over the river. Guy had stopped a day longer, because one day she had been tired, and she had missed the picture-gallery. In every few lines it was, "My wife;" "My husband." "All the artists are raving about my wife's beauty," wrote Guy. "One fellow, with a big yellow beard, has been praying me, with tears in his eyes, to let him paint her; he wants her for a 'Beatrice,' I believe. I suppose I must let him do it. If he manages to make a good thing of it, I shall buy the picture myself. Fancy Honor, in a

quaint green-velvet dress, 'and her hair studded with stars.'"

"You must take this letter to Humphrey: he will like to see it," said Mrs. Chichester, as Dym folded it up; "you will be sure to see him to-morrow, when you go over to Woodside."

Dym checked a refractory speech that was rising to her lips. See him! was she not weary of seeing him? The fields between Ingleside and Nidderdale Cottage were haunted by this big burly figure with the broad-brimmed hat. Dym would have escaped him over and over again, but for Kiddle-a-wink, who never failed to greet his friend with a loud bark. Humphrey caught Dym once trying to scale a hedge, only her white dress gleamed through and betrayed her.

"Were you trying to run away from me?" asked Humphrey, with his sad kind smile; but Dym was confused, and would not answer him. She hung down her head and walked by his side, and never once contradicted him. Humphrey certainly had the best of it that afternoon.

I wonder what Dym would have done if any one had told her Humphrey Nethecote was to be her fate—whether she would have called out loudly against the injustice, the impossibility of it, and have resigned herself to it after all? Many young creatures have had to put up with rough protectors, without a tithe of Humphrey's goodness, and have ended by becoming devoted wives. What was there about Dym that made this so impossible to her—that caused her to bridle and flush up at the least approach to tenderness on Humphrey's part, and to invest her sweetness with a hundred thorny prickles?

Mrs. Chichester's request was tantamount to a command, and there was therefore no reluctance in Dym's manner the next day, when she saw Humphrey coming down the road to meet her; on the contrary, she hastened her own footsteps.

But as she came up to him, after the first few minutes, her uneasiness returned. What was there about the fashion of the man that looked so altered? Humphrey was in the habit of wearing an old gray suit and leathern gaiters; the straw hat would be the worse for age, and brown with the sun: to-day his clothes were new, and fitted him; he had a white waistcoat and dark felt hat, and a jaunty little rose in his button-hole; he looked less angular; the old rusty air had left him; he looked what he was, a gentleman farmer in good condition.

His honest freckled face had quite a bashful glow on it as he came up with Dym.

"I hardly knew you," said Dym, dryly, as she handed him the letter. The new clothes, the rose, the picturesque slouched hat—what did it mean?

"I will read it presently," returned Humphrey, putting it in his pocket. "Mrs. Chichester shall have it back this evening."

"It will not take long. I would rather take it back," replied Dym, with a touch of her old contradiction. It was bad enough to have him the companion of all her walks, without his coming up to spoil their evening. Dym was turning decidedly restive.

"When do they come home, eh?" he asked, wrinkling his light eyebrows at her, but putting the letter safely in his pocket all the same. Dym had not yet found out Humphrey could be obstinate too.

"Not for six weeks. Let me see; it is August now—the summer seems as though it will never end," exclaimed Dym, fractiously, as she shook out the folds of her light muslin dress, and with a discontented air smelt the roses Humphrey had brought her.

Humphrey was always bringing her roses—great bunches of delicious creamy roses, with a background of fern and heliotrope. As she scented their fragrance, she suddenly remembered sitting in the long narrow school-room at Lansdowne House, and Edith coming in and heaping her lap with these same roses.

Humphrey looked a little anxious over the girl's discontent and abrupt answers.

"When they come back you will have to go away," he said, with a touch of sorrow in his voice, which somehow moved her in spite of her humor.

Yes, she will have to go away, she tells him, sadly enough now. There is no room for her then at Ingleside. Honor will take her place and work; no one will want her—no one—no one. The tears start to the girl's eyes as Humphrey takes her hand and makes her sit down on the little bench beside him.

Oddly enough, it is the very bench where Honor and Guy sat that May afternoon. It is August now; the gorse is as yellow as ever, but the heather is out, and the common is full

of tender violet-bloom. The geese came up waddling as usual, stretching out their long white necks and yellow bills; up in the sky the lark is singing near a little white cloud.

"My dear," says Humphrey, with a break in his manly voice, for Dym's words are very pathetic, "somebody wants you—I want you."

Dym draws her hand away, a little startled.

"You are very good," she answers, with an effort. "I don't deserve it." She is conscious that her words are tame—that she has hardly answered him; but what did he mean by saying that he wanted her?

"Don't go away from me," says Humphrey, humbly, for in her odd confusion she is moving as far away as the bench will allow. "I have been wishing to speak to you all these months, and have never been able to sum up the courage. I want to tell you that you need not go away."

"I must go," returned Dym, hurriedly. She was getting quite nervous now. Somehow her old friend was changed in his aspect this afternoon. It was not this sort of grave serious Humphrey she had teased. "I must go; there is no room for me at Ingleside. You do not know what you are talking about," she went on, trying to pluck up a little spirit with which to answer him; but it was a miserable failure.

"Yes, I do," replied Humphrey, quite gravely, but speaking as gently as though to an infant, for he had no wish to frighten her. "But there are other houses besides Ingleside that will be glad to have you. I am all alone, Dym; why should you not come to me?"

"How—why—what do you mean?" she asked, breathlessly; even now she does not understand him, and why—how dare he call her Dym?

"There is only one way in which you can come to me, dear. May I tell you what that is?"

But Dym jumps up from the seat and covers her face with her hands: her cheeks are burning now.

"No, no! Mr. Nethecote, why do you frighten me so? why are you so unlike yourself? You must not call me that. Oh, I am so unhappy!" But Dym was trembling, so that she was obliged to let him draw her again to her seat.

"Does it make you unhappy to know I love you?" asked

Humphrey, mournfully. "It seems to me now that I have loved you ever since I raised my eyes and saw you peeping over the paper that day you came to Ingleside. I have gone on loving you every day since then, and it is not in my nature to leave off, I am afraid."

"Oh, please do!" Dym begged him. She was sobbing with agitation now. "It seems so dreadful, when I cannot—when you know I cannot—do it in return."

"Do what—love me?"

Dym nodded.

"I did not expect it—don't misunderstand me—how could you care much at first for such a rough fellow? But you say it makes you unhappy to go away. Will you"—his voice almost giving way with his earnestness—"won't you trust me? won't you let me take care of you? I would be content if you could only give me a very little, and let me love you."

"Please don't, Mr. Nethecote." The tears were fairly streaming down her face now. The good, generous Humphrey! "Oh, how sad, how dreadful it all seems! I like you so much that it makes it all the harder; but indeed I must go away."

"The Cottage is empty," he went on, in his simple way. "I am almost a rich man now; Providence has been pleased to bless me. Do say you will come to me, dear; you don't half know how lonely it is, and how I am always thinking about you. There is not a hair of your head that is not dear to me—a man's love can be so strong."

But Dym only hid her face and cried.

"Will you not try to like me a little?" There was no help for it: he would have her answer.

Dym gave him a childish pitiful look as she put her hands down.

"Oh, I do like you very much, you are so good to me, Humphrey!" speaking his name for the first time. "I cannot bear to think that this has happened, and that you will cease to be my friend."

"My dear, I could not turn against you, whatever happens. I wish I could," he returned, with a faint smile. Poor Humphrey, how white his face had grown!

"And you will be my friend still?"

"Without doubt."

"Ah, how kind you are! I wish I could have done this, but it would not be right. I would not love you in that way. I am not what you think; I am foolish and vain. I should not have pleased you."

"You would have been good enough for me." How the big faithful heart was laboring with its pain! but not even now could he make pretty speeches. Good enough! Were not her words perfection? was she not pleasant to his eyes, the dearest, the sweetest? Something came up in Humphrey's throat and choked him as Dym made her honest little protest; she had spoken it in all good faith and humility. A few weeks ago she had been wondering if any one would love her; and now this man had come, and was almost overwhelming her with his tenderness. Oh, how good he was! Why could she not love him? How could she make him understand that she was thrilling with gratitude and sorrow, that his friendship was precious to her, and that she prayed never to lose it?

"Forgive me; do not be angry with me; I cannot help myself or you," she said, humbly stretching out her hand to him.

Humphrey pressed it gently, and laid it down. It would never be his—never—never!

"Why should I be angry? A woman's heart is not always to be won. I can't promise to give up loving you, Dym, but at least I will not trouble you with my sadness. By and by, when I have got over this, it shall be as usual, and we will be friends."

"Yes, yes," she replied, eagerly.

He had risen, and seemed waiting for her, and they walked silently on together. How Dym's head ached! how she longed to break the silence! to bid him leave her alone to her own thoughts! but she could not muster courage to address him.

Now and then she stole secret glances at the grave sad face; but Humphrey seemed lost in his sad thoughts. At the trysting-stile he suddenly stopped, and asked if she wished to go on alone.

Dym timidly answered, "Yes."

"Then good-by, dear. I am hardly myself just now, and perhaps it will be better. Try to forget about all this the next

time we meet. I shall be your old friend Humphrey. Will you remember that?"

And as Dym looked up in his face with sorrowful assent, he stooped down and kissed her brow as a brother might have done, and then, looking back with another kind smile, went striding home through the fields.

Dym had a very tender heart in spite of her faults, and it was nearly broken by Humphrey's last kind smile.

Mrs. Chichester wondered what ailed the girl that evening. Dym was quite speechless and distraught.

After dinner Mrs. Chichester beckoned her to take the low chair at her side; her fine woman's instinct guided her to subtle conclusions. Dym's voice had new startled tones in it; a little artful questioning, a few soothing caresses, and then it all came out.

Dym could not keep her pain to herself—she wanted to know if she had been very wicked; she put down her head on Mrs. Chichester's lap, as though she were a veritable child, and told her tale in agitated whispers. She had wounded the noblest heart—she should never be happy again. Humphrey loved her, and she could never be his wife—never—never!

"Is it very wicked of me?" cries poor Dym, laying her cheek against the kind hand; "one cannot make oneself love. I never thought of this, and I have often been so cross and ill-tempered with him, and he has borne with it all. Oh, what shall I do? I can never look him in the face again—never—I have made him so very, very unhappy."

Mrs. Chichester sighed, as she set herself to comfort the little culprit. Humphrey was an especial favorite, and she thought he deserved a better fate. She had set her heart on seeing Dym installed in Nidderdale Cottage; it would be so pleasant to keep her near them; and, to do her justice, she believed that Humphrey would make her an excellent husband.

It cost her something to relinquish her pet scheme. Under these circumstances perhaps it would be better for her *protégée* to leave Birstwith altogether. Humphrey would never be cured of his hopeless attachment while Dym remained at Ingleside. If only Dym was certain of her own mind! Mrs. Chichester was not quite so sure of it. She saw Dym was startled and repulsed by it now; but might she not bring herself to look

upon it in a more sensible light? Humphrey's good qualities would make themselves felt after a time. These young girls require management and soothing, so Mrs. Chichester was not altogether sure of her hopelessness.

But Dym must be comforted at any cost, and she hastened to assure her that she had not been very wicked. These things were not always to be helped. On the whole, she had behaved very well, and said all she ought to have said.

"We must leave it now; of course it is a great pity, and I am very grieved for poor Humphrey; but you must not make yourself ill with crying, my child; men have these troubles sometimes, and they always get over them. By and by Humphrey and you will be the best of friends." But in this Mrs. Chichester lied to her own conviction; and Dym sorrowfully shook her head—she, on her part, did not think Humphrey would get over it.

Poor Humphrey! His honest heart would only have cleaved to her the more if he had known the grief with which the girl bewailed her own hardness of heart and his disappointment. To a true woman there can be nothing more sorrowful than to know that she has saddened some brave heart that has failed to win her love. The attachment may cause her some secret pride in the retrospect, but she will hardly boast of her conquests, as some of our modern Boadiceas do, when they count the captives they have dragged intentionally at their chariot-wheels, every one of whom had reason to hope he would be the victor.

I believe flirting is considered a very venial sin in most of our gay circles; the youth of one sex is considered to be proper prey for the other; to win admiration, to attract, to inveigle the unwary enemy by artful ambush and skillfully-planned sallies, is only held as lawful amusement. The queens of society acted more nobly in the ages of chivalry, when they sold their charms to the bravest bidder; women were as ready then to place themselves at their highest worth. It seems strange to us now to think of them smiling in scenes of horrid confusion and bloodshed—the fair lady of the tournament looking over the tapestried barrier with unshrinking eyes at shivering lances and riderless horses, and broken casques streaming with blood. She gives her slim hand and the golden chain together to the victor as he rides up; he is stained with dust and blood;

his armor is hacked, and shows grisly wounds through the rents; the discomfited rivals limp off the field; it is to be hoped, however, she has no lurking preference for the one with yellow hair instead of black; if she has, she masks her anguish under smiles. She dresses her victorious lover's wounds with balm and ointment. Fancy any of our Belgravian ladies doing the same for their lovers! The tournament is over. Everything is fair in love and war. Doubtless the yellow-haired knight would have made a villainous caitiff of a husband. Up with the tents, and forward to the castle; victor and vanquished will feast merrily together in the great hall presently.

But Dym was no fashionable lady. Her heart had not yet been hardened and inflated by the triumphs of a season. She was unsophisticated enough to feel heartily sorry that all this had happened. Perhaps she was not so unhappy as Humphrey, after all—poor Humphrey, who sits knocking the ashes out of the pipe he has not smoked, and rating himself for a fool—a middle-aged fool—who had not learned yet that his heart ought to be growing gray with his head, that he should love soberly, and content himself with moderate wishes, and not think that he could place a fair young figure by his hearth who would be still young while he was old, whose tenderness was no fit mate for his roughness.

"Fool that I was ever to think she could fancy me!" he groaned; "and worse than fool, to imagine that a young thing as she is could be tempted merely by an offer of a home! I wonder if she will ever find any one to love her as I do, or work for her either, soft-hearted blundering fellow as I am. She would not have needed to lift her little finger; I'd have made the Cottage such a bower she'd hardly have known it, if she would only have come to me. But if I loved her a hundred years, she would never care for me; no one but Katie ever did." And Humphrey looked round the empty room that no woman's presence was to brighten for him.

Humphrey was too humble and sweet-tempered to rail over his evil fortune. After a time he bore his trouble with his old stoical fortitude; good and ill had come to him, and he had accepted both with the same pious submission; it was not his way to complain. In his and Honor's veins there was a tinge of Scotch blood. His mother, Elspie Nethecote, was descended from the old Covenanters; among his ancestors were stern

red-bearded Highlanders, who had fallen before the sword of Claverhouse, who were massacred in glens and wildernesses for adhering to the simple formulas of their national faith. In spite of his soft-heartedness and slow gentle ways, Humphrey at times proved himself worthy of the noble stock whence he had sprung. Life had taught endurance to both him and Honor. Though his heart was sore within him for many and many a long day, and his cheerless hearth became more cheerless, he would have scorned to be crushed under his misfortune. "Happy or unhappy, we must do our duty," was his and Honor's motto; and nobly did Humphrey fulfill his.

Early and late he worked as heretofore; there were fields to sow and harvests to reap, though the dark-eyed girl he loved would not come to him and make his home pleasant to him. Sometimes, as he looked round his richly-stocked garners, and saw himself adding acre to acre, and knew that he should die wifeless and childless, the sad thought would cross him, Of what good was it all, when none should come after him? True, Honor might have children, but they would not need his wealth. What should he do with the good things that came so freely at his bidding? And the answer seemed vague and distant enough.

Humphrey meant to keep his word when he promised Dym that he should remain her friend. It would have been simply impossible to avoid her, even had such an intention ever formed itself in his mind; he must have come upon her again and again in church, in the village, in the fields that must be crossed and recrossed at morning and evening.

Dym went a long way round the road the next time she went to Woodside. She started and turned pale at every long shadow thrown over the sunny path. If she missed seeing Humphrey for the next few days, it was not because he intended to avoid her for his own sake—it was only his thoughtfulness that shielded her from a chance meeting till the wound had a little healed over, and he could say the ordinary friendly words that should set her at her ease. Humphrey argued stoutly with himself that it was all one whether he saw her or not; the pain would be a little harder to bear, perhaps, when her winsome face was actually before him; but in the long run it would be all the same. Absence would not help him; time only could heal the wound that was forever breaking out afresh. "By

and by, when I am old, the pain will die away," he thought; "when she is married, perhaps, and has children of her own, she will not be afraid of her old friend then." And then came into his simple mind a score of pleasant pictures, for all their background of sadness: how he would befriend her and them; how the one with the mother's eyes should be his favorite, and grow up upon his knee—should inherit the broad acres, perhaps, of Nidderdale Farm; he thought how proud he would be of them, and how he would be called Old Humphrey among them, and how she and her husband—"and, whoever he might be, God bless him!"—thought Humphrey, should find in him the truest friend.

Ah! peace with thee, honest Humphrey; the dream goes on, and the aching sadness goes on, and fresh troubles cloud the horizon, and stormy days are in store for thee and all thou lovest! Oh, when the heavens are black with clouds and darkness, and one gallant vessel founders on the rocks, I can see thee bravely taking thy part, and battling with conflicting elements; and I know that the dream will come true, and that thy battered bark shall come into fair haven at last!

CHAPTER XXVI.

"IN THE MIDST OF LIFE."

Dym turned quite white when she saw Humphrey next: he came into the drawing-room at Ingleside one evening when Dym was reading to Mrs. Chichester.

"I have brought the letter back," said Humphrey, quietly. He did not stammer, or blunder over Mrs. Chichester's foot-stool in his usual luckless fashion. He shook hands with Dym very gravely as he noted the whiteness. If it had been in his power, he would have saved her this awkwardness. "Have you been quite well, Miss Elliott?" he asked presently, with his old kind smile. Humphrey was bearing himself quite bravely, while pale Dym was shrinking into her corner.

"We have had another letter since then," observed Mrs.

Chichester, with a sigh: she was very sorry for Humphrey, and Dym too, but her mind was full of other things. "I have had a great disappointment, Humphrey, but—but you must read it for yourself."

"They are not coming home," Humphrey argues shrewdly, as he unfolds the letter; it is written from Salzburg, and is in Guy's handwriting, but, as usual, there is a little note from Honor.

Guy's letters had always been perfect in his mother's eyes, but this one was unusually loving, as though the writer wished to soften some great disappointment he felt he must inflict. "My dearest mother knows we are longing to see her," he wrote, "and that no consideration but one could induce us to defer our return. Honor was dreaming of Ingleside last night; she is always talking of our home and you, and what we are to do when we are together again; we have both decided there is nothing like Old England after all; and I am afraid Honor is just a trifle homesick"—a "For shame, Guy, with you!" scored under, in Honor's large firm handwriting.—"But, darling mother, there is a 'but' to all this. Dr. Guthrie (you may know his name in the London Directory) is staying at our hotel here. Honor has been ailing with a cold lately, and I thought it best to consult him. He gave us his opinion, which coincides exactly with Dr. Grey's—by the by, he speaks very highly of him; they were friends and fellow-students in the 'auld lang syne'—they both say Honor's chest was weakened by that illness of hers, and that an English winter would be very trying to her; however, he recommends us, by all means, to do Rome and Venice *en passant*, and then to winter either at Nice or Mentone. I can assure you, dearest mother, we both looked very grave over this advice. There can be no doubt as to what we ought to do; but it goes so hard with both of us to disappoint you; we had set our hearts on spending Christmas at Ingleside. You will be so dull without your children; and then there is the chance of that operation in February. If we do this, you will not see us till we have celebrated the anniversary of our wedding; for I could not bring my wife home till I knew the cold spring winds had died out of our valley." Honor's letter, too, was full of anxious tenderness; the wife's heart was evidently yearning for her husband's home and the loving duties that awaited her.

"I think this has come to teach us that our happiness is almost too perfect," wrote Honor. "It does us good to have our wishes crossed just now, if only you were not to be included in our disappointment. Guy sighs, and says, 'Poor mother,' and then scolds me because I echo the sigh; he will have it I am homesick, because I dream so often of dear beautiful Ingleside. But is it not my home? Keep our places warm for us, mother; I wish I could put my arms round you, and kiss away the tears which I feel will come when you read our letters and know Guy is not coming back to you yet. Guy sends his love to Dym; tell her we shall both love her better for taking such care of you."

Poor Mrs. Chichester looks at Humphrey for comfort as he reads both letters slowly. "Christmas without them; and I was beginning to get their rooms ready." She sighs, and another heavy wrinkle crosses Humphrey's brow. As he sits there, under the lamplight, Dym can see the light frizzy hair is streaked with gray, and so are the rough whiskers and beard; Dym wonders she has never noticed it before. She reddens as Humphrey raises his eyes and sees her looking at him; and Humphrey draws his hand nervously across his mouth. "It is best as it is," he says, with a blunt attempt at consolation; "The Duchess's chest has not been too strong, of late years, and when two doctors agree we have a chance of getting at the truth. Depend upon it, the squire's right, and it is no good fretting ourselves over what can't be helped." Humphrey's voice was a little husky over his philosophy. Mrs. Chichester shook her head as she detected it.

"You always speak cheerfully, Humphrey; but you know the winter will be long to you as well as to me."

"Madam will have her say," replies poor Humphrey, with a smile at Dym; but somehow Dym is not ready for it, and meets it very gravely. She breathes more freely when Humphrey gives her his hand and goes away. She shuts herself up in her room for a long time afterwards, but Mrs. Chichester wisely forbears all inquiries. Dym cannot look at her friend yet without sorrow; his gray hairs, the coldness of his hand, and those slow gentle smiles of his, are continually before her. Nothing comforted her so much as a long letter from Will, when he heard of her trouble. Will said nothing about his disappointment at the news; he did not even reproach her

with her strange blindness, or say a single word as to Humphrey's virtues. He saw the girl's tender heart was bruised by the pain she had inflicted, and, like Mrs. Chichester, he strove to comfort.

"Be always my honest tender-hearted Dym, and tell me all that troubles you," he wrote. "I liked your letter, dear; it made me feel proud of my sister as I read it. I think it is noble and really womanly to feel as you are feeling; I would not spare you one tear that refusal has cost you. I would not have my child a whit less humble and child-like. All is as it should be; now you must try to forget it. Put away from you every thought, except that you have a very good and faithful friend. I do not like that expression, 'When I think of Humphrey I feel as though I should never be happy again.' My dear, the good God never meant us to bear other people's burdens in that way. Leave Nethecote to do his part and battle through his disappointment; and remember it is a real duty now as heretofore to 'cultivate cheerfulness.'"

Dym used to read out bits of Will's letters to Mrs. Chichester. Mrs. Chichester used to say they were as fine as some of St. Francis de Sales'. Both women had lately elevated the pious Bishop of Geneva to be their favorite saint. "He is so cheerful, my dear," Mrs. Chichester would say. Poor lady! what with her blindness and the long lonely winter that was approaching, she had much ado to preserve her cheerfulness, especially as she had such an unreasonable dread of the operation which every day became more inevitable.

The mischief had been slowly working for years. It was wonderful how long she had contrived to deceive her son. Dorothy used to read to her mistress before Miss Elliott came. Dym's refined voice and clear modulations were a perfect treat after Dorothy's high-pitched rasping tones. Most of the household were conversant with their mistress's misfortune long before it became a subject of conversation at the vicarage. "You know now why Miss Elliott came," observed the vicar, a little reprovingly. Katherine shrugged her shoulders; it was a habit of hers to find fault with most of Aunt Constance's sayings and doings. "I call it flying in the face of Providence, going about alone as she does," she replied, severely. "She actually wanted me not to send Kenneth up to the house with her the other afternoon—was sure she could find her way alone; and when

I asked where Miss Elliott was, I found she was over at Woodside, as usual, teaching those boys; as though Guy gives her a hundred a year to teach Rupert Grey Latin. I call it downright robbery and neglect," finished that lady, in her most virtuous tones.

"I don't think you ever will approve of works of supererogation, Kitty," returned her husband, sleepily: "if any one but Miss Elliott had done it we should have heard a different version. How you two women hate each other!" And the vicar lounged off to his study and his sermon, thinking what a pity it was Katherine had such strong prejudices, and had taken such a dislike to that nice pretty Miss Elliott.

In November Mrs. Chichester took Dym up to London with her; and they stayed for a long time at Lansdowne House. Dym sat in the long narrow school-room again, and made friends with Mrs. Vivian's successor, and once, by special favor, spent an hour alone in her old garret. Anna Freiligrath, the young German governess, found her curled up there among her boxes, and staring with dim eyes over the strip of gray sky and the tall white shining roofs, behind which a dull red sun was sinking.

"*Ach Himmel, liebe Freunde*, thou wilt be starved with cold," cried the warm-hearted Anna, as she rubbed Dym's blue little hands. She was an honest, good-natured girl, and was always ready to *tutoyer* and otherwise pet Miss Elliott.

Dym struck up an alliance with the sturdy little German. Anna's flaxen plaits, her round blue eyes, her pale freckled face, were a great contrast to Dym's dark eyes and graceful little figure. Anna's voluble tones, a little guttural, the gray stocking, bristling with needles, always produced from her pocket, her long stories about her brothers Albrecht and Rudolph in the Prussian army, and her anxiety that Dym should know they were Von Freiligrath, were highly amusing to Dym. When Mrs. Chichester could spare her, she always joined Edith and Fräulein von Freiligrath at their tea. To-night a bright little fire burned in the grate, a kettle gossiped on the hob, the round table was dressed with cake and preserves; Caroline, in her blue ribbons, hovered near. "Shall we light the candles, Fräulein? Oh, here is Miss Elliott, dear Miss Elliott!" cried Edith, joyfully, springing to her friend. "Do you know 'Lamentation' has kittens, and I am going to call

one of them 'Joy,' and another 'Snowball'? Don't you wish Cousin Guy were here to choose the names?"

"Hush, chatterbox, and come to tea," says Anna, holding up an admonishing finger. "*Meine gute* Catherine, place the chair for Miss Elliott near the fire; she is starved with cold, and looks as though she had seen ghosts." And Anna pours out tea, and knits and prattles in a cosy fashion; and the flaxen plaits shine in the firelight.

Has she seen ghosts? What kindly spirit looks out of those glowing flames that are leaping and crackling over the logs? Humphrey's sad eyes are looking at her! No, it is years ago; she is sitting in Anna's place; she is a friendless governess, without a creature to love her but Will; some one with broad shoulders is lolling against the fireplace; a brown face, with rough tawny beard, looks round at her. "Ah, are you there, my little friend?"

"I am only spinning in the moonlight," breaks in Dym, quaintly. "What tale is it to be to-night, Edith?" Edith clamors for "Undine." Fräulein tells it charmingly, and the child listens breathlessly to the pranks of Kühlehorn. "Poor Undine! it was better to be without one's soul than to suffer as she did," says Dym, with a sort of shudder, when Anna had finished.

"Not so, dear heart," returned the little German, piously; "for so there would be no future for the Undine with her beloved after she had wept him to death, and the tale would lose its moral."

"But she is very unhappy in her crystal palaces," says Edith, sighing. "It is a sad story. I like the part about the dwarfs pelting each other with gold-dust best."

Anna promises a more cheerful story next evening, and hums a plaintive little tune, as her needles cast off row after row. Dym knows the words that belong to it; they are Goethe's:

"Kennest Du das Land wo die Citronen blüh'n
Im dunkeln Laub—die Gold-orangen glüh'n—"

Anna misses the intermediate lines, and finishes with a sort of mellow hum—

"Dahin—dahin,
Möcht' ich Mit dir O mein Geliebter ziehn."

and Dym remembers it as one of the songs Honor used to sing in the old house at Kensington.

Dym enjoys that visit to Lansdowne House. They see very little of the Delaires, who live in a fine house at Hyde Park Gate. Beatrix is mentioned as one of the great beauties of the last season. Some one says Mrs. Delaire is quite the fashion.

Dym saw Colonel Delaire riding in the Park once, and he reined up his horse when he saw the Tressilian liveries; he gave Dym a very cordial smile.

"I am glad you have got over your accident so well, Miss Elliott. Beatrix ought to have been over to Lansdowne House this week, Mrs. Tressilian, but she has been so busy with those tableaux—she and Adelaide Beauchamp seem to have time for nothing else—though I am bound to say Miss Beauchamp is the more sensible of the two."

"What a pity her wedding is put off on account of Colonel Lintot's death, Frank!" observed Mrs. Tressilian, languidly. "George seems a nice steady fellow, though he has round shoulders and stoops so dreadfully. I think Adelaide might have done better, though she is no beauty, and seems to fancy no one but George. Well, give my love to Trichy; it is a great pity she is always too busy to come and see her mother."

As Mrs. Tressilian delivers herself of this unusually long speech, she sinks back exhausted on the cushion, and Colonel Delaire canters off. As he lifts his hat, Dym sees he is getting very bald, and his face has the same pale harassed look it wore at Ingleside last Christmas. People say the beautiful Mrs. Delaire has a temper, and does not always show herself very submissive to her husband.

Dym had the good fortune to see a great deal of Will. Mrs. Chichester would send her off to spend long days with him. Dym always found him busy and cheerful, but looking thin and with a cough, and not always able to hide from her anxious eyes that his strength was not equal to his work.

That visit to London did her great good, and partly for her sake, and because her blindness made her shrink from the long winter and the emptiness of Ingleside, Mrs. Chichester made her sister promise to spend Christmas with her.

Dym was very glad to have Edith again, and to see more of Fräulein von Freiligrath. Mrs. Fortescue always cut off the ridiculous "Von;" she called it "such nonsense in a gov-

erness who has to earn her bread;" but, on the whole, she was far more gracious to Anna than she had been to Dym.

"*Meine Liebe*, she trains after one like a great white serpent," Anna remarked, confidentially, when they returned one snowy winter's night from the vicarage, where the young people of the neighborhood had been invited to play charades and forfeits. Humphrey had been there, and Anna had distinguished him with a great deal of artless favor; he was like Albrecht, only both Albrecht and Rudolph had great big sandy moustaches. He had a great benevolent heart, Anna was sure; and he had an empty niche in it for some one. "O thou little Marmorbild," cries Anna, embracing Dym, "this great distinguished farmer loves thee, and thou carest for him not that—nothing," snapping her little plump fingers —"forsooth, because he has rough looks and a gruff voice. Go, you are a cold-hearted girl; you do not deserve to be betrothed." Either Anna's eyes were shrewd as well as round, or Humphrey could not quite control his looks.

Dym was very glad to have Anna as companion in her walks to Woodside; it saved her a good deal of awkward embarrassment. Those walks were drawing to an end, however. Before the snow quite died off from the high land about Birstwith, gentle Esther Grey laid down the burden of her sufferings, and Dr. Grey was a widower.

Dr. Grey bore his heavy loss with fortitude, but it aged him. People said the doctor would never be the man he was again. Friends rallied round him in his trouble, and an unmarried cousin offered to keep house for him and his children: there was nothing for him but to accept it. Dym was there when she arrived. She was of French extraction, Dr. Grey told her; had lived in Rouen most of her life, and was therefore unknown to her English relations; he heard that she was a most exemplary creature, and had tended her mother lovingly to her death. Her name was Bergamotte—Louise Adrienne Bergamotte—and she had a little income of her own, sufficient to maintain herself.

"Louise was a pretty girl once, before she went over, but I do not know what she is like now. I only know she has given up her home and all her little belongings to do me and my children a kindness." And Dr. Grey, as he said this, went out sadly into the porch as he heard the sound of wheels,

and Dym stationed herself and the children at the window, to watch for the first glimpse of Cousin Louise.

"Cousin Louise"—it sounded pretty. There was the fly turning the corner. Dym strained her eyes as well as she could through the darkness. There was a bird-cage at one window, with a gray parrot in it; a regular French poodle, with a tassel at the end of his tail, looked out of the other; a shrill little voice called out to the driver; a well-gloved hand handed out a bandbox, some large uncouth brown parcels, a tabby kitten, another bird-cage, and some curiously-shaped baskets.

"Is that all? Where are you, Louise?" says Dr. Grey's sad voice.

A little brown wrinkled lady, with prominent teeth and bright eyes, in a sort of yellow turban, jumps out, and kisses him on both cheeks.

"*Mon pauvre Edouard*, where are the dear children? I hope you'll not mind my bringing my parrot and Chéri. Chéri, Chéri, show yourself to this good cousin. Thou art looking thin, Edouard. Ah, the poor angel, I know all about it!" And Louise presses a little flimsy handkerchief covered with pink half-crowns in good earnestness to her eyes, and then comes running in to kiss the children.

How they and Dym stare at her! So this little shriveled bright-eyed woman is Louise. One or two of the children are afraid of her white teeth and dark face. Rupert gazes with disgust at the yellow bonnet; his dear beautiful mamma never wore such things. Louise pats them all kindly.

"You think I am Madam Wolf, my little *chou; tais-toi*, thou shalt see otherwise." And she frisks to the great brown-paper parcels. What toys, what drums and soldiers, what gingerbread queens and wonderful confections and chocolate! The dusky little parlor quite gleams with the treasures. The children cram hands and mouth, and crowd contentedly round Cousin Louise now.

"You are the same as ever," says Dr. Grey, with a smile on his lips and something glistening in his eyes.

Louise looks up with a friendly nod. "It is all right; see, Edouard, by and by these little people will love me. Now, *mon ami*, we can sit and talk."

Dym comes away presently, quite contented. She and

Mrs. Chichester are to go up to London the next day for the dreaded operation. When she comes again, she finds Cousin Louise ruling the little household very happily. The children love her, though the boys call her "Cousin Wolf" to her face. Dr. Grey respects and confides in her. Louise wears big frills to her nightcaps when she comes out to hush some child crying in his sleep. Dr. Grey sometimes sees the little woman, in her huge brown *peignoir*, gliding with motherly face from bed to bed. She makes excellent coffee, and pours it out with a wonderful red-and-white fichu tied over her head. The fame of her *potage*, her *chocolat*, and her excellent *confitures* reaches even Mrs. Fortescue's ear. Louise concocts wonderful soup, and carries it with her own hands to the sick people, her poodle Chéri trotting after her. Louise and her gray parrot and Chéri are the delight of the village children. She is only a lean little shriveled woman, with prominent teeth, with a shrill voice; yet Dr. Grey blesses the day when Cousin Louise came to his motherless children; and Rupert, when he grows up, says the best friend he has, next to his father, is dear "Cousin Wolf."

If it had not been for the cause, Dym would not have been sorry to find herself back at Lansdowne House again, and in the society of the friendly Anna. It was the end of February; the worst of the winter was over. Dym carried the first snowdrop in to Mrs. Chichester on the morning they started for London.

It was with intense thankfulness that Dym wrote to Mr. Chichester a few days afterwards, announcing that the dreaded operation had turned out a very simple affair after all; both eyes had been successfully couched, and Mrs. Chichester now lay in her darkened room, exhausted and thankful, and dictating all sorts of loving messages to her son and Honor. A heap of soft pink and white wool lay on the couch beside her. Dym was always picking up stitches and rectifying rows now.

"If we work hard, do you think it will be in time?" whispered Mrs. Chichester; she was forever holding endless confidences with her young companion on the comparative merits of fringe or tassels; all the news of the three kingdoms would not have interested the placid woman half as much as the soft ribs of the quilt that were forming under her skillful fingers. And why? Because a wonderful secret was mixed up in those skeins and balls of wool!

The little quilt lay ready and finished in the Blue Room at Ingleside long before the news came, which Mrs. Chichester was able to read for herself.

"Oh, my dear, come here. Is he not happy? Dear, dear Honor!" And as Mrs. Chichester held out her son's letter to Dym, tears of gladness coursed down the mother's cheeks.

"Darling mother, thank God for us!" wrote Guy. "To-day they placed our little girl in my arms—such a tiny girl, with Honor's eyes. I have just kissed both mother and daughter. Honor would not rest till I laid her baby in her arms. I wish you could see my darlings together—they both look so happy. Honor sends her dear love; I will not let her excite herself by delivering a longer message."

"Is he not happy!" exclaimed the poor mother, again. "Neither he nor Honor seems disappointed that it is a girl, Guy's little daughter! Well, fetch me my desk, my dear. I must write to him myself, and to Honor too."

Mrs. Chichester's cup of happiness seemed literally brimming over; the good news fully repaid her for the inevitable delay. It was the middle of April now, and Honor could not travel till the end of May. Guy wrote with some regret, a few days afterwards, that the little one was so frail that they thought it better to have her baptized by the English chaplain there. There was no time to write severally to the sponsors, but Honor wished her brother and Mrs. Chichester and Dym to stand by for the child—Humphrey was to telegraph their answer—and the doctor and his wife had promised to act as proxies. Dym was greatly moved when she heard Guy's message. To stand sponsor to his and Honor's child—to be thought worthy of such a privilege! For a little while she was almost too overcome to signify her assent. How strange that Humphrey was to stand with her! "Tell him there is nothing I would not do for you and him," she wrote, in the fullness of her heart, to Honor.

Guy had told them that Honor's favorite name was Florence. Florence Honor Chichester was to be the little maiden's name. Guy wrote a touching account of the whole affair. The service was held in the room adjoining Honor's, so that the mother might join in the prayers and thanksgivings. In defiance of all usages, Guy had insisted on holding his little daughter himself, and had only given her up when obliged to

do so. She had cried when the clergyman touched her, but had been quite quiet and good when she was in her father's arms again, and lay cooing and opening her eyes, "just like gray flowers when the sun throws a shadow over them," wrote Mr. Chichester.

"I hope they don't let her do too much," sighed Mrs. Chichester; and Dr. Grey, when he heard of it, hoped so too.

A few days after the receipt of the last letter, Dym was sitting one evening reading to Mrs. Chichester. May had set in unusually cold and wet—a compound of March winds and April showers; this day in particular had been cold and gusty. The valley was full of driving rain, a vaporous gloom clung to the hills, the fields were steaming, a wet glistening of sunbeams had alternated for a short time at sunset, but the clouds had closed in heavily again, and the steaminess and the rain prevailed.

Mrs. Chichester shivered as Dym put down the book.

"Ring for lights, my dear, and tell Stewart to bring another log. It makes one dreary to hear nothing but the rain beating on the terrace. Just now I fancied I heard footsteps outside the window; it must have been my fancy."

"Of course it was," replied Dym, cheerfully. "No one but Mr. Chichester ever goes round to the conservatory-door, and we should have heard the great door open if it had been a visitor: the idea of any visitor coming on such a night!"

"Yes, it must have been my fancy," repeated Mrs. Chichester, thoughtfully. "I think the wet weather makes me nervous; everything makes me that to-day. I could almost have believed it was Humphrey coming up the terrace, the footsteps sounded so like his."

"I will ask Stewart to close the shutters, and then we shall lose that dreary patter-patter. Why, I could almost believe I heard it myself," laughed Dym; but she was nevertheless glad when Stewart appeared with the tall silver candlesticks.

"I think Phyllis wants you, miss," said Stewart, pointing over his shoulder to the hall. Was Dym getting fanciful too, or was the lad's ruddy face a little pale? "Phyllis wants you particular, miss," stammered Stewart, putting down the candlesticks awkwardly enough.

"Take care; you are dropping the wax. Why can't Phyllis come to me here, if she wants me?"

"You had better go to her, my dear," observed Mrs. Chichester, shivering and drawing her shawl close round her; "and shut the door; there seems such a draught outside."

Dym found herself in a perfect whirlwind when she left the drawing-room; and no wonder, for the conservatory-door was open, after all. Dym had half a mind to call Stewart, only she was ashamed of her fears.

"Where are you, Phyllis?" she exclaimed. "Why don't you shut that door, somebody?"

"It is only I," returned Humphrey's voice, outside. "Wait in the conservatory a moment, please; I will be with you directly."

It was very mysterious, but Dym did as she was told nevertheless, and a moment afterwards Humphrey made his appearance.

"I was only speaking to Miles," he said; "you were so long in coming, my dear. Did not Stewart tell you?"

"Stewart told me Phyllis wanted me. What—what is the matter, Humphrey?" faltered Dym, growing suddenly pale over her words. Humphrey's clothes were dripping with water, the rain-drops hung on his whiskers and beard, his face had a white ashen look on it, and his lip trembled strangely. "Oh, Humphrey, I see it in your face—something dreadful has happened! Tell me quick, Humphrey, dear Humphrey," catching hold of his arm and speaking in a frightened voice. "You have heard something—Mr. Chichester—Honor—who——"

A shudder seemed to shake Humphrey from head to foot, and for a moment he held the little hands so tightly that Dym could have screamed with agony.

"Give me a moment," he gasped. "It is true. They told me so, for I could not read it for myself—Honor is dead!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

THROUGH THE CROSS TO THE CROWN.

"HONOR is dead!"

When these terrible words forced themselves from Humphrey's dry lips, Dym staggered back as though he had given her a blow, and her hands fell weakly to her side.

Was this some awful delusion bred of the wild gusty evening? The conservatory-door had blown open again of its own accord; Dym's dress and hair waved in the wind; a great noise and numbness and roaring seemed in her ears; splash-splash went the rain; the drops trickled down the folds of Humprey's dreadnought, and formed themselves into a glistening pool at his feet; the lights seemed to flicker and flash more brightly before Dym's eyes. Was she standing on firm ground? was everything tottering and reeling round her?

"It is not true," she said, putting out both hands to steady herself, and catching hold of Humphrey again.

"Don't touch me—I am wet."

How hoarse his voice sounded! He never knew why such a little thing as that should come into his thoughts. He took the girl's hands gently from his wet sleeves, and held them. Dym's white face and fixed staring eyes frightened him. A sort of hysterical cry burst from her lips.

"It is not true! Oh, Humphrey, it can't be true! If it were, it would kill him."

And she looked up pitifully into Humphrey's gray face. Her first thought was for him—not for this poor Humphrey, who stood there striving for words with which to answer her, and chafing the little hands that were not half so cold as his.

"Hush! you must not cry—not yet," he implored, as though he were speaking to a child. "We must think of him, and her too," with a look at the closed drawing-room door. "I thought I would tell you first, and then you could help me."

"Of course I will help you, if I know how," returned

Dym, putting back her hair from her face in a bewildered sort of way. "I am thinking of him—I always do. I think I shall pray that he may die too. Oh, Humphrey, you are sure it is true?"

Need she have asked? A sort of heart-broken smile wreathed poor Humphrey's lips for a moment.

"There is the telegram—read it for yourself," he said. "No, put it away; there is Madam coming," he answered, hastily; and Dym glided a step or two away from him.

Mrs. Chichester looked a little taken aback when she saw the two standing together.

"Is that you, Humphrey? Why do you keep him standing there, Miss Elliott? Come in, both of you, and let him warm himself at the fire."

Humphrey cast a piteous look at his companion. He had asked her to help him.

"Come," he said; "it is no use waiting; she will see it in our faces."

Humphrey was given to meet his troubles with a dogged sort of courage, and even now it did not forsake him. Dym felt as though she were doing her part badly. He had asked her to stand by him, but as yet she had bethought herself of no way in which to assist him.

"What brings you up on such a night as this, Humphrey?" continued Mrs. Chichester, cheerfully, for the prospect of a chat with her old friend was very pleasant. "I think you deserve an extra welcome for coming to see us on such an evening."

"Ay, ay, if my errand were a good one," returned Humphrey, gruffly, not taking the chair to which she pointed him.

"You have bad news!" exclaimed Mrs. Chichester, suddenly changing color as Dym had done, but speaking still in her silvery tones.

"I have," was the blunt answer.

"Then, for the love of Heaven, Humphrey, do not keep me in suspense! My boy"—catching her breath quickly—"nothing ails my boy?"

"God help your son, he has lost his wife!"

"Not our Honor?"

"Dead!" And, as Humphrey uttered the monosyllable,

he put his hand to his throat, as though something strangled him.

Mrs. Chichester looked at him almost vacantly for a moment, and her head moved tremulously; Dym saw the soft hands fluttering aimlessly in the air, and she knelt down and put her arms round her.

"Don't look like that; God will help him to bear it," she sobbed; "we must all pray that he may be able to bear it."

But the poor mother had not taken it in yet. "My son has lost his wife," she repeated, mournfully; "my son Guy." And her hands dropped heavily into her lap; she turned with helpless scared looks from one to the other, as though beseeching them to help her.

"You have been too quick, Humphrey—she cannot understand."

But Humphrey only shook his head with a look of anguish. "I have done my best," he answered, in a stifled voice. "What could I do, when every word choked me? Speak to her, Miss Elliott; she is only dazed with her trouble."

But Humphrey's voice had already aroused her.

"Why do we wait? Why do we not go to him?" she suddenly exclaimed. "Dym, why do you not tell Dorothy to come to me? I must go to my son."

"Dear Mrs. Chichester—dear—dearest—you cannot go."

"Madam is right," interrupted Humphrey, hoarsely; "we will be off to-night. If I travel day and night, I will see my poor Duchess again. Oh, Honor! Honor!" And Humphrey's iron face was convulsed suddenly, and he dashed away a hot drop or two with his hand, as he remembered his Duchess would never come smiling to him again.

"Good Humphrey, you will take me," and the poor lady stretched out her hands to him. "I do not forget Honor is your sister, but I must go to my son. My boy is in trouble, and wants his mother—I know he will want his mother."

"She is right," Humphrey said again, decidedly. "Madam is right; of course the squire wants her, and of course she will go to him. Tell Dorothy to pack up her mistress's things. What are you looking at? you may trust her with me," he finished with a touch of impatience, as Dym stood looking at him in helpless perplexity.

"Do what Humphrey tells you, my dear. I think God has

sent him to help me." With the necessity for instant exertion, Mrs. Chichester had recovered her calmness—these mothers have such strength: her limbs still trembled strangely, and her face was deadly white; but when Dorothy came she could still give her full directions, appealing to Humphrey at every word to know if she might do this or that.

"I think I ought to take Dorothy, she may be useful;" and as Humphrey nodded, "Go up with her, my dear, and let one of the maids help; and tell Stewart to bring some coffee for Mr. Nethecote;" and as poor Humphrey shook his head with a gesture of disgust, she said, reproachfully, "We must eat and drink, Humphrey, that we may have strength on the way. I want to be of use to my boy when I arrive, and you must let me take care of you too." And the gentle creature took the rough hand and pressed it to her lips, as she repeated, "I think God has sent you to help me find my boy."

Dym left them and went up-stairs, with a load of dull aching sadness at her breast. As she closed the door she heard a hoarse sob from Humphrey—one, and then another—and she knew that the unhappy brother had broken down for a minute under that touch of motherly sympathy—only for a moment, however, and then the man's intense strength forced back the anguish again. Oh, those awful tearless sobs of strong men, when some crushing sorrow is upon them—laboring sounds, rending the heart of those that hear them, but bringing no relief to the bereaved! Nature has ordained that men should be dumb in their grief: the strong crying is made in secret. Women may weep their souls away, when men only bow their heads in silence. Still are there times when the mighty avalanche of woe breaks down the barrier of reserve. I think when men weep the angels must weep with them, to see such bitter sorrow on the earth.

Poor Dym! her tears seemed dried up at their source. They were going to him, all through the night and the driving rain, through other nights and other days, that Humphrey might see his Duchess again, and that Mrs. Chichester might comfort her son.

She had no part or lot in their trouble. Honor loved her, and Honor was lying cold in her shroud—that beautiful life was ended. The wife was snatched from her husband—the mother from her babe; the happy bride, yearning for her

home, was already in the icy arms of Death. That calm beneficence, that sweet womanly presence, should bless them no longer; the brother and husband must sit broken-hearted beside their empty hearth, and who should comfort them?

Dym packed and folded, and strove to remember the little comforts that Mrs. Chichester would require on her journey. The tears were streaming down Dorothy's stern face and over Phyllis's red cheeks, but Dym had an odd lump in her throat, and a strange ringing noise in her head. "I shall never forget my little friend;" some dull echo in her brain seemed to be repeating the words over and over—"little friend—little friend." They were leaving her behind, when she would have gone barefooted only to have kissed those closed gray eyes again. Hark how the wind howls, and the rain is driving across the terrace; the boughs are creaking in the garden below; doors open and bang; lights flicker and go out.

"Leave out the seal-skin, Phyllis, and the rug lined with black bear," Dym says, in a strange far-away voice. Where is she? Not here—not in this softly-lighted room. Her face is damp and cold, as though she were dying; dreadful shivers dart through her frame; the piercing wind is lancing her with icy knives; strange faces gibber through the darkness; the stars come out one by one. Who is this crying to her dear Lord to save her—for Death is abroad and walks the fields to-night? Something warm and loving touches her; strong womanly hands raise her up; delicious warmth tingles in her frozen veins. Who is it who wraps her in her own soft furs? who warms the stiff hands? who kisses the poor cold cheek and lays it on her bosom? "He has sent his angel. Oh, Honor! Honor! The one taken, and the other left."

Phyllis's rosy cheeks are quite blotched with crying; she looks at her young mistress with round frightened eyes. Dym's lips are tightly pressed together, her face looks dark and wan, and a heavy frown of pain furrows her brow.

"What are you doing, Phyllis? Mrs. Chichester will want her warm wadded cloak for to-night," she says, with quick impatience. She takes the strap out of the girl's hands, and buckles it more tightly; she almost snatches the traveling cloak and bonnet and carries them down-stairs.

"You have been very quick, my dear; the carriage is not round yet," says Mrs. Chichester, quietly. Her soft voice

and gentle movements contrast strangely with Dym's feverish eagerness. Dym notices the hands shake a little as the bonnet is adjusted; but nevertheless she makes the cup of coffee herself, and carries it round to Humphrey, and stands by him while he drinks it.

"Have you anything to say to me?" asks Dym, in her forlorn young voice. Humphrey raises his heavy eyes, and looks at her—a slim girlish figure, in a gray gown, standing under the great chandelier, with the heavy seal-skin dropping out of her arms. Her eyebrows seem to frown over her great wistful eyes; a pathos of repressed impatience and trouble is in her voice.

"Come here, my dear;" and the kind hands draw her and hold her fast. "You must not fret more than you can help—remember that; but your brother will take care of you."

"Will!" Dym's face grows a little less contracted now.

"Yes, I shall send you to him. If I left you here you would make yourself sick, and that could help no one. Be brave and patient. We will write to you, Humphrey and I. You shall know all. Ah, my child, let me go. We must not say more to each other now." And the mother's lip trembled as Dym kissed and clung to her with a sudden appreciation of that dear and tender friend.

"Take care of her, Humphrey; oh, God bless you both!" cries poor Dym. She puts up her face and kisses Humphrey, laying her innocent cheek for a minute against his, as though she can think of no other way in which to express her sympathy. The wind blows about the gray gown wildly, the lamps splutter and wave round the little shining head, a long lock of dark hair streams over one shoulder; so she stands in the halo of the lighted threshold, with the shadows creeping to her very feet; so he goes into the night and darkness, and bears her blessing with him. Hark how the storm-fiends rage above the valley; they can hear the hoarse voice of the Nid chafing against its banks; the elms are straining their mighty arms; the young rowan-trees are shivering like aspens. "There is no night there," says Dym, looking up at the angry black skies; and then she closes the door, and goes up to her room.

Mrs. Chichester had done kindly and wisely in bidding Dym go to her brother; the girl would have spent long miserable days wandering about the empty rooms and thinking of her

friends. Action was a relief to her, as it is to all of us in our trouble. To sit waiting with folded hands for news that is long in coming; to watch the sorrowful faces of those we love, and see the sadness reflected in our own, and yet not to be able to minister to them or to lighten their burden,—this is the saddest part that could be allotted to us. We would fain be up and doing, going to and fro about the streets, while conventionality draws down the blinds and hurries us into the darkened room. I wonder which of us would sit down patiently for seven days and nights with our friends, and speak out our barren human wisdom, as Job's comforters did. Nowadays the rending of garments and the sorry head-gear of ashes strike us as heathenish, though we are not yet shamed out of our sable palls and hired mourners; yet to the Jewish eyes, I suppose, the wailing and dirges of the minstrels had a fierce music of its own: it gave expression to their grief when it grew silent; it hushed the trivial platitudes of sympathy; it drowned other voices, and excited a constant tumult of regret. "To weep with them that weep." Why is it that this duty comes so hard to some of us? Why do the words falter on our lips as we take the widow's hand, or lift the fatherless child on our knee? Because words at such times are meaningless. Do we speak of comfort—can we bring the dead back again? Can we heal when He has wounded? Away with these commonplaces, these conventional speeches, that cost us so much to utter, and which do no good; rather tears, rather a strong cry of pain, than that, or a silent pressure or evidence that tells all and yet says nothing.

Dym lay and cried half the night for the loss of the friend she loved, and the sorrow that had come to those about her. She listened with a sore heart to the clock striking through the darkness as the storm lulled. When the wet gray dawn crept through the unshuttered window, she woke from a miserable dream, and with aching head and trembling fingers began to dress herself hurriedly.

She had told them that she should take the early train; and when Phyllis brought her a hot cup of coffee, she found her standing by the window with her bonnet in her hand, her little trunk packed, and Kiddle-a-wink sitting on her old plaid shawl.

"You will have a wet day for your journey, miss. Miles says there's a mort of clouds to come down yet, all the more that the wind's lulled," said Phyllis, stealing a sympathizing glance to the tired face and reddened eyelids of her young mistress.

"What does it matter, Phyllis?" returned Dym, listlessly; but she was glad of the coffee nevertheless. Miss Elliott was a great favorite in the household. Mrs. Bridget, the housekeeper, came up herself with the sandwiches for the young lady; even Miles, who could be high and mighty enough sometimes, thrust away his young coadjutor, Stewart, and himself put in the shawls and bags, and hoped Miss Elliott had all she wanted, and that she would not be tired by her long journey.

"Thank you, Miles, and you too, Stewart," returned Dym, with her sad little smile; even the kindness of these hirelings was sweet to the poor child; even the station-master touched his hat, and said a rough word or two of sympathy.

"This is a black day in Birstwith, miss: there is not a house in the whole village that has not lost a friend. I've put the box in the van; is the little dog going in with you, too?"

"Yes," returned Dym, absently. Kiddle-a-wink had already established himself on the opposite seat, and was looking out of the window, lolling out his foolish red tongue. Hark, the bell was tolling the dismal news. Dym leaned out for a moment eagerly, as the train moved from the platform. There was the little windy platform, with honest Dison stumping along it with a yellow dog at his heels; two children were carrying a great basket, and put it down to listen. "Mother says that's for the Good Lady," said one of them. The great rain-clouds were piling over the valley; the Nid was brawling and chafing over its boulders. There was the cottage beside the weir; it was empty still. The mill-garden looked dreary. Dym shivered and threw herself back on her seat, and the long weary journey had begun.

Dym had fallen asleep, and woke up stiff and tired as the train slackened speed and drew up at the platform of King's Cross Station, with its lights and bustle and crowd of passengers and porters, which was rather a bewildering scene to Dym's sore and aching eyes. Two or three passengers looked

back at the little gray-gowned lady with the gray dog under her arm; the crisp dark hair had got disarranged under the neat bonnet, and lay in stray waves over her temples; a pale wistful face looked out of the cab-windows.

They were jolting into brightness again, wide shiny pavements, flaming gas-lights, a jostling of foot-passengers and umbrellas across the muddy road; the omnibus horses were steaming, the shop-windows reeking with moisture, as Dym turned into Camden Town; she suddenly remembered it was Saturday night.

High Street, Camden Town, drove its usual Saturday-night traffic in spite of the wet. The cheap vendors of provisions had set up their stalls, and chaffered and cheated under the guttering tallow candles; thin women's faces hovered over the mountains of refuse fruit and inodoriferous fish; the hot-pie man drove a fierce competition with the vendor of kidney potatoes; two or three coal-heavers—temperance men—were scalding themselves with cups of hot coffee; some ragged boys had collected round an apple-stall; the butchers' shops were flaring to the tune of "Come, buy, buy;" a few slouching figures came out from the swing-doors of the great shining gin-palaces.

Dym looked out with amazed eyes; this was one of the phases of life in the great Saturday-night Babel. A hungry face or two, thin shawls and draggled gowns, a hubbub of voices, of straggling hoofs, then the dark bridge and the canal, more stalls and shops and brightness, a quiet corner with some almshouses, and a clock striking, the rain splashing down on the empty pavement and on the iron railway, and down into the areas of modest villas, and on the snowy steps of No. 3, Paradise Row.

Dym paid the man and ran in, with a hasty nod to Mrs. Maynard. It was Saturday night, and she knew she should find Will at home.

The cheerful glow of a little fire shone through the half-opened door; but the candlesticks were on the table, still unlighted. Will was not poring over his books or papers as usual. The tea-things were at one end, still untouched; a kettle sung cosily on the hob; there was a curious faint smell of ether in the room, and Will was in his easy-chair half asleep before the fire.

He did not rise when Dym came in, but only held out his hand to her with a look of extreme surprise.

"My dear child, why did you not let me know you were coming up? Who would have thought of seeing you to-night?" but his look seemed to say she was very welcome.

"Were you asleep, Will?"

"I believe I was"—yawning, and stretching himself—"I thought it was part of my dream when you came in and woke me. What time is it, Dym, and when did you arrive in London?"

"I have only just come on from King's Cross. What is the matter, Will?—you look pale." Dym was keeping her own face out of sight, while Mrs. Maynard lighted the candles and bustled about the room.

"Mr. Elliott has not been well. I think he has wanted you, miss. You have been sleeping finely, sir, for I opened the door once or twice very quietly, and you never heard me, nor Dick neither; but Dick creeps about like a little mouse."

"Not well, Will?"

"A return of my old pain. Never mind, I am better now. Make my sister some tea, Mrs. Maynard. And take off your bonnet, Dym, and sit down by the fire; I can't see you while you are standing behind me." And he took down a very cold little hand from his shoulder, and put her in front of him.

"Oh, Will, how dreadfully white you look, and your lips are quite dark! I could not half see you before."

"Pooh! nonsense! the pain is gone; I am only stupid from my long nap."

But Dym noticed that he spoke feebly, and raised himself with difficulty.

"You are not much to look at yourself, Dym; why, foolish girl, there are positively tears in your eyes. Indeed, I am better now."

"Yes, I know, Will, but it is not that; we have had such terrible news from Mentone; and Mrs. Chichester and Humphrey went last night; and they left me alone, and—and——" but Dym could not speak any more for crying.

"You need not tell me; I know, I can guess," returned Will, quickly. Dym had put down her head on his knee, and she did not see the strange look that came over his face; one hand was hidden for a long time within his waistcoat, and

his lips drew darker, and his breath was drawn with difficulty for a moment. "I knew it must come," he muttered, when the paroxysm had passed, and he wiped the cold perspiration that stood in drops on his forehead. Will was used to these attacks now; but he was, nevertheless, very glad that Dym's face was hidden on his knee.

"Oh, Will, how could you know? It seems all so sudden and dreadful; just when he—when they were so happy."

Will pressed his hand heavily on Dym's head.

"Yes, it is just that. How mysterious are His ways! Poor Chichester! it will go hardly with him, I fear. Only one year of happiness, and a lifetime of regret. How strange that you should have come and told me this to-night!"

"Why to-night, dear?"

"Because—because—well, I will not tell you; I have queer thoughts sometimes. I did not want you to say it out; I seemed to know all about it, as though I had expected it all my life long."

"Dear Will, it is not like you to be fanciful; how could you know that Honor was dead?" And Dym's lips parted anxiously as she looked at him. Will was hardly like himself to-night.

He answered her with a smile, half sweet, half sad,—

"Dym, do you believe in dreams?"

"Why, no, Will, of course not."

"I used to say the same," he continued, musingly. "Daniel was a man of dreams; but then he was 'greatly beloved.' I wonder, if we kept our hands and hearts pure, whether our guardian angel might sometimes come and whisper them to us. I had a strange dream once."

"You have never told it to me, Will."

"I never spoke of it to any one. I was afraid to breathe it even to myself. I seemed asleep and yet awake. It has haunted me ever since."

"You will tell it to me, dear?"

"When I woke it seemed to me as though the meaning was quite clear. Such a beautiful life could not die out without a sign. He thought he had her safe, poor wretch; one might as well have tried to detain an angel." He seemed as though he were speaking to himself, but Dym held her breath, quite awe-struck, as she listened.

"This angel must have had a woman's face, for the hand was hers. Perhaps you are right, and I am fanciful; but your news has not surprised me."

"You forget; I have told you nothing, Will."

"Nothing but what I knew. How did it happen? Is the child alive? I hope so, for Chichester's sake."

"Indeed we don't know," returned Dym, weeping; "the telegram said nothing but that she was gone. Humphrey said he must set out at once, and so did Mrs. Chichester; they have both promised to write and tell us all."

"And you have heard nothing?" returned Will, disappointed; "you don't know even whether she took her child with her or left it to comfort him. She would rather do that, I know. I wish Mentone were not so far off, and that I could go to him."

"Oh, Will, if you only could go!"

"What would be the good of it to either of us? He would wring my hand and look me in the face, but he would say no word to me. I should not dare to speak to him, he would be so hard and fierce and speechless in his misery."

"You are the only one to whom he would listen."

Will shook his head. "I tell you no, Dym; if he opened his mouth to me it would be to rail against Heaven, and curse his fate. Poor Chichester! we must pray for him; but no spoken sympathy can avail him."

"And his mother?"

"He is beyond her now; he will put away her arms from about him and say terrible words, and go away and shut himself up with his dead. Her tears will craze him. She will want him to eat and drink, and to keep his miserable life in him; and one of these days, when it grows too intolerable, he will leave you all."

"Oh, Will, cease, cease; you frighten me."

"He will come back, my girl," returned Will, looking at her with his gentle smile. "I know him so well. These noble souls are not left to wander away into outer darkness. Do you remember the story of Sintram, Dym, and how the Lady Verena prayed for him from behind her convent grating? Don't you think that a wife in Paradise prays for her husband on the earth?"

"Do you think so, Will?"

"My child, why should we doubt? There are sudden horizons, where heaven and earth seem to touch and mingle. We believe 'in the communion of saints.'"

"Do you really think she will watch over him, Will?"

"You would call me fanciful again if I were to tell you some of my thoughts. We are getting too material nowadays, Dym, and so the finer voices get hushed out of the universe. We talk too much, and listen too little."

Dym sat on the floor, with her earnest face propped on her hands; her bonnet had fallen off, and her hair fell into dark shining waves. What a childish sweet face it was, in spite of its paleness and tear-stains! Something pathetic in Dym's attitude seemed to strike Will, and he suddenly bent down and kissed her forehead.

"My poor tired little Dym!"

"It rests me so to hear you talk, Will."

He gave her a full bright smile of understanding.

"I think we have talked enough now. Pour out the tea, Dym, and give me a cup; I must go out directly."

"To-night?" exclaimed his sister, in surprise; "there is no service."

"The boys will be practicing, though. No, don't keep me," as though he anticipated the remonstrance on Dym's lips; "I must go down to the church to-night." And Dym knew him too well to venture on raising an objection.

She waited for him to come back until she was tired.

Kiddle-a-wink had curled himself on his chair and had gone to sleep, and Dym had fallen into a half doze over her sad thoughts; she was thinking what Will had said about Guy Chichester, and longing, with a vain fruitless longing, to see him again, and judge for herself how he looked. "Do the finer voices get hushed?" she thought, with a dreamy remembrance of Will's speech. "If I held my breath and listened, could I hear Honor's voice?" And it almost seemed to the weary girl as though Honor's beautiful face were growing out of the stillness and firelight: the frank sweet eyes, the powerful gentle brow, the lips closely folded, yet smiling. "I will do anything for you and him," Dym seemed to be saying; and Honor, or somebody else, answered, "By and by."

"How long you have been, Will!" opening her eyes wide as Will came in and closed the door softly after him.

He came up to her side with a face of grave brightness.

"What, up still, naughty child? I thought you would have gone to bed long ago; do you know it is eleven o'clock?"

"I am very tired," returned Dym, sleepily; "where have you been all this time, Will?"

"Where should I have been?" he returned, quietly; "the church was nice and warm, so you need not be afraid of my vigil; the rain has stopped too; and there is such a moon!" and Will's face seemed almost to reflect some of its light still; it dazzled Dym, holding her chamber candlestick, and looking at him through half-closed eyes.

"Try and sleep well, precious child; we must both try to gain strength for to-morrow. I have been making up my mind to-night that I must tell you something that you ought to know; but to-morrow will do. My poor Dym," holding her very tightly for a moment, "you are very fond of your old Will Conqueror, as you call him."

Dym's eyes were not a bit drowsy now.

"Well, I would not have you love me less, if it caused you ever so much sorrow. God means us to love each other, and so to draw each other up: we must still keep hold of the 'silver cord,' though it is loosed sometimes."

"I wish I were as good as you, Will," returned the girl, humbly. She did not understand him in the least, only in a vague sort of way she thought how Will's sweet nature seemed to distill even the bitterness out of sorrow itself; he had taken her news with the air of a man who is given to look out gravely at life. The terrible surprise had hardly elicited an exclamation; throughout their talk he had sat dreamy—self-absorbed—with the wondering look of one who is dealing with mysteries.

Dym was too weary even for sorrow to-night; she crept up to her little garret, next to Dick's, who chirped out a good-night to her as she passed, and had soon forgotten her own and other people's troubles.

As Will closed the door after her, a little of the brightness died out of his face, and he sat down sighing in his easy-chair.

He had been praying for Guy Chichester to-night, wrestling for him as he had never wrestled for himself; the links that had bound these two men together had never been stronger

than to-night. Will felt a strange intense longing to press his friend's hand again and look into his dark grief-worn face; while Guy, stretching out his arms over his dead wife's face in the fierce writhings of despair, thought that there was only one voice he could bear to hear in his misery, and that was Will's.

Will raked up the dying embers of the fire again and fed it with fresh fuel; he had much to do to-night. With the clearness and perspicuity that sometimes come to us under the influence of some great emotion, he had set himself to review his past life: again the years passed before him, one after the other, each with its several marks of joy and sorrow, with its burden of sins and regrets. Had it been such a sad life, after all? There were aspirations unfulfilled, hopes disappointed, patience struggling with regret; the breaking out of a sudden pain and longing that had drowned his soul in terror; trouble had come to him, and toil, and suffering; but the dominant calm of his nature had endured all and prevailed.

He had not always been unhappy, even when his trouble threatened to overwhelm him. The storm had beaten over and around him, but within there was peace, the peace of a quiet conscience, of a steadfast performance of daily duty done with such measure of strength as had come to him.

He remembered how in his boyhood he had longed to do something heroic, something out of the common ways of men, that should place his feet among the heroes. Dym's name of Will Conqueror had pleased his fancy, and he smiled sadly to himself to think how the youthful ambition had died away.

And yet, in his humble way, had he not striven to the utmost? He had not fought with dragons, perhaps, but he had battled with hydra-headed monsters of disease and ignorance. He had proved his virgin armor in foul dens, and the noxious breath of the fierce reptiles had overborne his young strength; had he not come out wounded, and bearing honorable scars from the conflict? was he not bearing them now?

"I have done so little; it has been so short, after all; I have not earned my rest," he thought, sadly, and his head drooped on his breast. Will it be so with all of us when we cast up our poor blotted accounts and see the sorry sum-total of our good deeds? So much for good intentions—whole pages, hun-

dreds, perhaps; such a thin sprinkling of actions really performed, of good thoughts really lived.

Here was a pure nature crying woe to itself, because the weakness of its will had sometimes betrayed it; because he had called out at times upon his loneliness and wished that his hearth-fires had burned more brightly.

He remembered how an old pauper had recognized this instinct of longing once.

"We have all our troubles to bear," he had said to her, as he sat beside her in the great whitewashed ward, listening to her dismal category of woes—Jem was at sea, and Susan was too poor to come to her, and it was hard dying with naught but strange faces about her. "One may have food and raiment, and yet feel sad and lonely at times." Something in the patient tones seemed to touch her; she was a hard, battered-looking woman, with a tanned face and bristling gray hair, and Will's face looked strangely youthful beside hers.

"Ay, ay, we all have our troubles, paupers as well as gentlefolks; thou'rt a lad to be a parson; thou'rt the sort women love; but I'm thinking the Lord loves thee too, and He won't let thee be long lonesome."

Was not old Susan right? had it been long, after all? would he change his lot with Guy Chichester? No, a hundred times no.

"'He doeth all things well.' Why have I been so impatient, so distrustful? He has made this pain easy to bear—a joy almost. 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant'"—we can guess how the humble soul chanted his *Nunc Dimittis*. Unhappy!—the length and breadth and depth of his peace seemed to flood the poor room with light; he stretched himself on his bed with a smile on his face; he was tired, and the morrow's work was before him. "I think I shall sleep now," thought Will, as he turned his face to the wall; and almost before the words left his lips he slept.

That night William Elliott had another dream. He thought he was standing on a strange place, neither land nor water, but on some shifting substance that gave way beneath his feet. A heavy burden was on his back, something that trailed behind him and dragged him back, and yet he dared not try to free himself.

"I am so tired of it all," he heard himself say; and the

sound of his voice seemed to echo strangely; "so tired of it all."

"Conqueror, and tired!" said a voice that thrilled him strangely. "Look here!" and suddenly the weight slipped from him. At his feet lay a broken cross, and a crown of scarlet rowan-berries lay beside it; but as he stooped and picked it up, they changed and brightened into gold.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"QUI PATITUR VINCIT."

THERE are days which, in spite of all their sadness, we would give worlds to live once more.

Dym would have given a good year out of her life if she could have had that Sunday over again.

Life has such terrible surprises; now and then its mysteries are so cruel. If we could only lift the veil just a little; see the sand that is ebbing from the hour-glass; watch the clear steady strokes of the scythe, that is coming our way perhaps; "if we had only known, we should have done so differently," we say.

Ah, that is just it! We come down one morning a little listless, a trifle out of humor; the day goes on; we laugh and talk, we are moody or discontented; we waste our time in trifles, in looking up vacantly at passing clouds, and we do not know that the hours of one we love are numbered; that to-day, or to-morrow, or the next day, we shall say a good-by that will wring our hearts with the remembrance. If we had known! —if we had only known!

This Sunday rose with a misty brightness on it, a soft vaporous light, neither gloom nor sunshine; the pavements were washed clean, little gleams and hints of water glittered under hollow stones and down garden paths; the spring flowers were prematurely faded. William Elliott and his sister looked regretfully at the clumps of battered tulips and narcissus in the little three-cornered garden belonging to the sexton. St.

Luke's bell was clanging out with a sturdy wiry sound; in the distance other bells chimed in, in various tones; a few young people were already gossiping in front of the Independent chapel; the minister, a great burly man with a red beard, came round a corner, swinging his arms like pump-handles, and nodded to Will. Will seemed to have a word of greeting for every one he passed—for a friendly omnibus-driver, for a couple of porters off duty, for the old man at the crossing; by and by he stopped to speak to a few loiterers in the Malden Road.

"If I were you, lads, I would not trouble those bells to ring for nothing," he said, halting and looking at them with shrewd kindly eyes. One of the youths, who was better dressed than his companions, blushed and looked at Dym.

"Mother goes to chapel," said another, sturdily.

"Church or chapel; but it is the dear old Mother Church that is calling to us all so loudly just now. Come lads, six days for yourselves, and one for the God who made you." And, to Dym's surprise, three out of the four sheepishly followed them, and the young schismatic remained discontentedly, kicking his heels against the wall.

Will left Dym to show the boys to their places, after which she went to her favorite seat under the west window; the old blind man had long ago been gathered to his fathers, but a white-headed sweeper occupied his place. A watery sunbeam or two was shivering against the pillars, and kindling the violet and blue robes in the Evangelist window—the altar was in shadow—all dull reds and faint golds. Will looked shadowy and white as he came out of the vestry; the organ played on in sweet minor chords. Dym, standing up with set lips and wistful far-away eyes, suddenly remembered how a brown hand, with an odd-shaped Oriental ring on it, had in that very place been laid on her book, and how she had flushed up with surprise and pleasure, and left off singing.

Dym could not sing now, not a note, there was such a tangle of pain and weariness in her heart; the words came to her ears with a jangle of meanings and repetitions. "We have erred and strayed," prayed Will. Dym knelt in her place, dumb and motionless. "Comfort him, only comfort him, and let little Florence live;" she blended this petition somehow with every response in the Litany, she sang it silently in every

line of the hymn; "comfort him, comfort them all." Was there any other prayer worth praying?

"For all that are desolate and in trouble—perhaps, when she comes to that, she may think of me," sighed poor Humphrey.

Will read the prayers and preached. Mr. Benedict was away. There was to be a charity sermon in the evening, somebody said, and the chaplain of the almshouses was to deliver it.

Dym listened in a stupid sort of attention at first; she thought it odd that Will should be preaching a funeral sermon, till she remembered he had told her of rather a sudden death that had occurred in the parish.

A woman, comparatively young, had died, leaving six children motherless behind her; the widower was sitting in a pew to the right of Dym, with the two eldest children beside him; the bigger girl was looking at the crape tucks in her frock, and the younger had hold of her father's hand. As Dym watched the little group she strove to clear her mind and listen.

Afterwards, when she would have given worlds to recall that sermon, she could only bring up disjointed sentences—a word here and there. She had a vague sense of standing out on a mountain-top, she was on tiptoe, giddy and breathless; suddenly a door opened, somewhere up above in the blue infinite. Were those the white-robed multitudes Will was talking about? Was Honor among them? were those the wives in Paradise who were praying for their husbands?

"Don't cry, papa," she heard a little voice say near her. A man's head went lower and lower, a dark cropped head, not a brown curly one; broad shoulders, that somehow reminded her of Guy, heaved and shook in repressed agitation. "Now unto Him who is able to keep us from falling," comes in a strange falter from Will's lips, the organ breaks into sad minor chords again, and the people stream out. Dym's veil falls over her face as she stands in the empty church, listening to the dirge-like music and watching a streak of lilac sunshine in the chancel; the widower has gone out, with his little girl's hand still clinging to his. Her crape tucks are crumpled already, though her sister's are quite fresh. She has a tender old-fashioned face that lingers in Dym's memory.

"Are you ready, my dear?" says Will, limping up to her

with a tired face. "I have two or three people to see on our way home."

Dym, who is restless, prefers waiting for him instead of sitting alone in the little parlor. She watches him diving down area-steps or stumbling up wooden staircases with undiminished activity.

"Sunday is your hardest day; but I have never seen you look more weary," she says to him, when at last he had finished and turned his steps to Paradise Row.

Yes, he is tired, too much so to eat, in spite of his efforts. He is getting a battered old Conqueror now, he tells her. He says it with a sudden sweet smile that brings the odd feeling into her throat again. Dym sits dull and listless when he goes out to the schools presently; the sunbeams have gone in, the afternoon is full of gray neutral tints. Dym's pale face and gray gown, and Kiddle-a-wink's rough coat, seem all in unison. Some pallid sunset clouds are setting westward. "This is more like November than May," Dym thinks; and then she remembers with an inward shiver that this is Guy Chichester's wedding-day.

What is he doing? What are Mrs. Chichester and Humphrey doing? How far had they got on that weary journey of theirs? Dym's mind is traveling on with them while she sits by the little window in Paradise Row gazing vacantly out on the passers-by. The children troop in by twos and threes from the Sunday-school. Little Dick Maynard clatters by on the pavement, and pulls off his old cap when he sees Dym. The children gather in bands and look slyly down the street; a slight bowed figure comes in sight, with a dying flare of red clouds behind him. There is a little commotion, a dropping of curtsies. Will comes up among them limping in his hasty way. Tired as he is, he has a word and smile for them. "Now, Dimples, a cup of tea, for I must be back in the vestry by half-past six: one of the choir-boys has got into mischief." And Will sinks into his easy-chair with a long sigh of relief.

"I have not had a word with you to-day, Will," said Dym, reproachfully, as they hurried through the streets again.

Will suddenly turned and held out his hand to her.

"It is all in the day's work, my dear. But I have saved an hour out of it for you."

"But not to-night, Will. I am not so selfish as to ask you to talk to me to-night."

"I wish it, dear: it is the hardest bit of duty that is left for me yet. I want you to be brave and help me to do it."

"Help you, Will?"

"Yes, my child." But he said no more, and Dym went and sat for a long half-hour in the dimly-lighted church, wondering why Will had asked her to help him, and what he would have to tell her that would be so hard in the telling.

And the real truth never entered into Dym's head for a moment. Will read the prayers again, but a stranger preached; afterwards they had that wonderful hymn, "The Pilgrims of the Night," which she remembered was Guy Chichester's favorite:

> "Faith's journey ends in welcomes to the weary,
> And heaven, the heart's true home, will come at last."

Dym's mind was full of one poor weary pilgrim, when, looking up, she saw Will was not standing in his place, but kneeling low, with hidden face, and his hands stretched out on the desk before him.

Dym waited for him as usual in the porch; she was quickening her steps, for the evening was chilly, but he detained her. "Not so fast; there is no hurry, now. Look up there;" and Will pointed to the dark sky above their heads, gemmed over with quivering points and sparkles of light. "I am so glad we can see the stars to-night."

"Why, Will?" Dym was for hurrying on again, but he drew her arm through his.

"I have an odd fancy for starlight on Sunday evening—those many twinkling eyes always recall to me 'the great cloud of witnesses.' I am glad, too, we had that hymn to-night. I wish Chichester could have heard it."

Dym's reply was scarcely audible.

"I thought of another little pilgrim while they were singing it, and wondered where her 'weary steps' would turn by and by. I have been thinking of you on and off all day."

"Of me?" There was certainly a little reproach in Dym's tones; she thought there were others of whom he might have been thinking to-day.

"I have not forgotten them either"—as though he under-

stood the implied rebuke: "somehow, my heart feels large enough to take in the whole world; you will know presently why I think of you most to-day."

They were in one of the by-streets leading out of the Malden Road, when all at once Will stopped, and she felt his arm press heavily against hers.

"What is the matter, Will?" for, though it was too dark to distinguish his face, she could hear a quick pant, almost a groan. "Is it the pain again?"

"Yes; I must walk slower. Don't speak to me—not this minute, Dym. I shall be better directly." But Dym noticed that he leaned on her more heavily every minute, and that he could hardly drag himself up the few steps that led to their door.

"Dear Will, this cannot be your old pain," she said, anxiously, as she watched him sink wearily into his chair.

Will shook his head, and motioned her to give him a little bottle that stood near. A blue livid look had come over his face, and the lips had the same dark color that had startled Dym yesterday. The breath seemed to come in heavy pants for a moment, and then the oppression left him, and he opened his eyes and looked at Dym, who was kneeling beside him, trying to chafe his cold hands.

"My poor little Dym, I did not mean you to see this. Give me a few more drops, dear; I shall be able to talk presently."

"You must not, Will; it will make you worse;" and tears gathered slowly to Dym's eyes: she had never seen him look so bad as that.

"By and by," he repeated, and then he seemed to doze.

Dym noiselessly fed the fire, and sat herself down to watch him. Tired! He was wearing himself out; the colorless face looked quite sharply cut and haggard against the dark cushion; the mouth had its usual sweet look, but the brow was contracted and furrowed with pain. Dym wondered why she had never noticed that Will was growing gray. His fair hair had quite a silvery gleam in it in the lamplight.

One thin hand lay over the side of his chair. Dym's lips twitched once or twice as she sat looking at him, with a dull ache and vague uneasiness in her heart. Was he ill? Was that what he was going to tell her? Anything but that! "Oh, Will, Will, I could not bear you to be ill now, when I

want you so!" And Dym's head drooped with the very thought.

It was quite late, almost midnight, when he woke and declared himself refreshed.

"And you have been watching me all this time! How kind of you, Dym, and how tired you must be!"

But Dym did not feel sleepy to-night, so she told him: "I am quite wakeful, too much so for my own comfort. Do you really think you are better, dear?"

"The pain has left me," he returned, evasively, as Dym put back the damp hair from his forehead. "Dym, do you think it would be too late to give me some tea? I always wake so thirsty after one of these attacks."

"Too late? of course not." And Dym bustled off with some feint of cheerfulness. The little kettle seemed always singing in the curate's room; it quite bubbled over in its cosy content now. Dym made the tea and brought it to Will.

"This seems like old times," he said, looking gratefully in her face. "Are you sure you are not tired? You must have some tea too. Do, to please me, Dym;" and Dym made a great effort and swallowed some.

"Now put your head down here," drawing her with weak hand among his cushions. "You won't hurt me, and I can talk better so. Tell me, darling, have you any idea why I'm thinking of you so to-night?"

"Don't, Will." Somehow his words seemed to hurt her with a sudden sharp pain; she put out her hand to stop him, but Will carried it to his lips.

"I would save my child from this if I could. God knows I would willingly have gone on a little longer for your sake, Dym—only for your sake; but I feel it is not to be, dear; you must make up your mind to part with your poor old Conqueror."

"Never, never! What are you talking about? Hush, I will not listen! Oh, Will, Will!" And Dym stretched out her arms to him with a piteous entreaty for him to stop.

"Dearest, I must say it—it would be cruel kindness to withhold it now. I know I cannot live very long, Dym."

"Who says so?—they dare not say so. I will not believe it—I will not, I will not!" And Dym's wild words came through her clinched teeth in strange vehement tones. Be-

lieve that Will, her Will, could ever leave her? The girl's shrill young voice filled Will's tender heart with dismay and anguish.

"Do you want me to stay in this weary world, my dear?" he said, almost reproachfully. "I think I am getting too weak and tired for my work. What was it they were singing to-night, Dym, darling? 'Faith's journey ends in welcomes to the weary!' Would you deprive me of such a welcome as that?"

"Hush, hush! I want you, Will. Oh, Will, I love you so—I love you!" And the unhappy girl threw her arms round his neck and held him almost frantically.

"This is the hardest work of all," murmured poor Will. "Oh, my child, be brave, and help me to bear it!"

"I cannot," came sullenly from Dym's lips. She was almost beside herself.

"Not if it makes me worse to see you like this? I have so little strength, and this wastes it terribly." And again the ominous darkness came to his lips, and the poor overworked heart labored and strained bravely to do its part.

"Some more drops," he said, faintly; "don't be frightened, I am better again; only we must talk more quietly; lay your head down again, I like to feel it there. When you were a child you always came to your poor old Conqueror to be petted."

"Will, you are breaking my heart!" She could not have helped that cry if her life or his had depended upon it. Perhaps he hoped to move her to tears by the tenderness of his words; perhaps he guessed at the spasm that contracted her throat, and knew the pent-up feelings must have some outlet. Already her breast was heaving with repressed sobs; she clung to him more quietly now, and the tears rained over his hands.

"That is right: cry, it will do you good, and by and by you will be able to listen to me—we must have some long talks together. Dym, darling, you know I love you too."

"But not so much as I do you. Oh, Will, not half so much, not half so much!"

"Do I not, dear? Nay, you are mistaken; you have been dearer to me than any one thing—except—but we will not talk of that. If it had been His will, I would almost have

been glad to live a little longer for your sake. You believe this, dear?"

She nodded, as though words were impossible.

"When I knew that I had heart-disease, my first thought was to keep it from you. I knew you would never be happy for a moment away from me. I thought I would spare you months, perhaps years of needless anxiety."

She left off sobbing to listen. Perhaps he was not going to die yet—not just yet.

"This is why I did not give you my reason for refusing to leave St. Luke's. There were other difficulties, but for your sake I might have conquered them; only I knew, I knew it would be useless pain to give up my work. You understand me, dear—you do not think I am wrong now?"

"Wouldn't it have made you better?" she whispered.

"No, my child," he replied, firmly; "dismiss that idea from your mind forever. The disease under which I am laboring admits of no human remedy: it is a worn-out heart, Dym, and nothing will make it work properly, though Dr. Lever says I may live perhaps for years."

"Then why—why did you not come up there and rest?"

"Because I did not believe him. No, my child, there are no years in prospect for me. I have suffered too much, gone through too much. I shall not have to bear much more. Oh, Dym, try to be glad for me; I am longing so sorely for my rest."

She only shook her head and buried her face deeper in the curtains. Glad! how could she be glad, even for his sake? The welcomes might be sweet to the faithful servant, but death itself seemed so terrible to this poor child, stretching out her tender arms to detain the brother who was so dear to her.

"Will, do not leave me; pray that you may not leave me!" clinging to him with one cold little hand, and speaking in such a weary voice.

"Would it help either of us? Dear, I must go or stay, just at His bidding. I am ready to suffer a little more, or I am ready to go to-night."

"I always knew you were too good for this world, Will," exclaimed the weeping girl. But Will silenced her gently.

"Hush! you must not say that: you would not pain me if you could help it, would you? He is more merciful to us

than we are to ourselves. He will not remember our failures. I have done so little, and He has done so much."

There was a moment's silence, and then he put his hand fondly on her head.

"Why do you keep your face hidden, Dimples? I want to see it again." Ah, the old pet name, the dear old childish name!

"I am so sorry you cannot love Humphrey, my pet; he would have taken such care of you."

"Please don't speak of that to-night, Will."

"Very well" (holding the sad little face between his hands for a moment and looking at it with wistful tenderness); "I should like to feel somebody was taking good care of my child forever and always. But it can't be helped. I know Mrs. Chichester will always be your friend."

"Don't mind about me; nothing will matter then." Dym was feeling for words to-night, but her pain choked them back. He might talk to her, but in her anguish how was she to answer him? Even Guy Chichester faded from her thoughts in the prospect of this new trouble.

"It has all been so sudden. To-morrow, if God wills, we will talk of this again. Now go to bed, my darling; it is nearly three o'clock."

"No, no," she implored; "I would rather stop with you to-night. I could not sleep. Let me sit and watch you, Will, as I did before. Only to-night—only just to-night."

"My precious child, it goes hard with me to refuse you; but indeed it is better not. I think I could sleep now myself, and your presence will only keep me restless."

"Shall you go to bed, Will?"

"I think I must; my limbs ache so, and I feel strangely weary. This has taken it out of me. You will be good and brave, and try to sleep, Dym."

A faint misty smile answered him. "God bless my child!" was all he said; but he held her tightly for a moment, as though he were not willing to let her go, and in the silence his lips moved as though he were invoking a blessing. But when she reached the door he called her back to him and blessed her again and again, and told her hurriedly that she must be comforted, for he would love her dearly—dearly, wherever he was. And so he sent her away.

But when she had closed the door he sank down heavily in his chair, and bowed his head upon his breast. He was tired —strangely tired, he repeated. This had been the hardest work that he had had to do, and it had gone hardly with them both.

As he sat there in the darkness—for the lamp was flickering low—the words "Oh, Will, I love you so—I love you so!" seemed ringing in his ears; again he felt her girlish arms round his neck, and her tears wetting his breast, and the damp soft hair resting against his cheek. "O merciful Allpowerful, comfort my child!" he groaned. And some voice out of the weird silence seemed to answer, as it had done before, "Not now, but presently;" and, as this made itself heard within his heart, the tranquil soul found peace.

"I must lie down and get an hour's rest," he thought; but some strange torpor oppressed him, and he felt unable to move. "'Watch for me by the golden gate.' I wonder if she will be there?" was his last conscious thought before he slept. The dying brands of the fire flared up for a moment and smouldered to decay; the lamp spluttered and hissed, and finally went out; Kiddle-a-wink stretched himself on the rug with a low whine, as though some dream had disturbed him; but still Will slept on.

Up-stairs Dym was tossing and weeping on her pillow, and praying impotent prayers; outside the cocks were crowing, a faint windy dawn stirred in the quiet streets, the stars were paling and dying out, and the quiet figure still sat on in the darkened room below.

"Let us go, that we may awaken him out of sleep," said the loving friends of old. Alas, none but One could awaken William Elliott now!

Dym, waking out of the troubled sleep that had come to her from very weariness of sorrow, heard some strange stir and movement, that seemed to reach her in her dreams. Somewhere, far off, Dick was crying. A voice said, "Hush!" A man's footstep went hurriedly to and fro. Dym threw something round her, and ran down; some terrible fear was clutching at her heart; she would have called out, "Will!" but her voice failed her.

The little household, huddled together, saw her advancing on them, slim and white, and looking before her with the

fixed dilated eyes of a sleep-walker; and honest Richard Maynard put out his hand, with something like a sob, to stop her. "No, don't go in there; my missis here wants to talk to you."

"I know," replied Dym, in an odd far-off voice. She put aside the brawny arm with a little cold hand and pushed through them. Dick fell over one of his crutches, and began to cry again; and Susan threw her apron over her head. "Ah, lackaday! the poor young lady, what will we do with her, Richard?" And Richard drew his rough sleeve before his eyes.

Know—did she know what awaited her? The blind had been pulled up; a May sun shone merrily into the window; Kiddle-a-wink was whining and smelling restlessly about the bowed figure that sat in the easy-chair, with its thin hands clasped before it, and a smile on the white face that rested so peacefully among the cushions. There, where he had parted from her last night, there he sat, dead; but still she made no cry or sign that she understood. She bent over and kissed him with a face that was almost as gray and corpse-like as his, then closed the glazed eyes, and laid the heavy head upon her bosom. Dead! of course he was dead; and she was dying too. It was Richard Maynard who saw the awful shadow in her face and caught her as she fell; it was he who freed the hands from their fond clutch, and laid the smiling face back on its pillow, and carried the girl up to her little room, and left her with Susan crying plentiful tears over her.

Dym's head was lying on the faithful creature's lap, when she woke from her swoon. Dym held out her arms to Richard Maynard to carry her down again when he came in next to inquire after her. "I dare not. You must help her, Susan; she bean't fit for anything but bed now."

"I must go to Will, and you must take me," answered Dym, in her feeble voice. "Good Richard, dear Richard, carry me down. Susan, ask him to do it. I cannot leave Will alone."

Richard fairly turned his face to the wall and sobbed, as the girl set forth her miserable little petition. She was hysterical after that, and Susan had her way, and tucked her up in her little bed, and drew down the blinds and sat beside her. Heaven only knows the anguish with which Dym lived

through those first few hours. She lay staring at the wall with blank dark eyes, when Susan hoped she was sleeping. Now and then she would throw out her arms and bury her face in the pillow, as some intolerable remembrance came to her mind; then she would feel Susan's rough hand smoothing her hair. She wanted to be alone—she wanted it with a fierce longing that nearly drove her frantic—but she lacked energy to say so. When the doctor—a white-headed old man—came to her bedside and took her hand (he was an old friend of Will's), she drew it away almost angrily.

"What do you want? Who sent for you? who gave you leave to disturb me?" she said, in a quick vehement way.

The old man understood the girl's despair too well to take umbrage at it; he answered her with fatherly kindness:

"You are not well, my dear. These good people sent for me. You must be patient, and try and bear your trouble—we all must, you know."

"Can you do any more for Will? have you been to him?" pushing back her hair and looking at him with strained, bloodshot eyes.

He shook his head.

"No one can do any more for him, my child; he is beyond our help now."

"Then you can do nothing for me. I am well, quite well; only I shall want him all my life long," she said, bursting into tears and falling back on her pillow.

It was evening before they left her alone. Susan thought she had fallen asleep at last, and had gone down to sit with her husband a little; but Dym, who had been lying perfectly motionless watching the creeping shadows on the ceiling, suddenly sat up, and then began groping her way down the dark staircase. She had told them in a fierce sort of way that she was well; but as she dragged herself along she felt as though she had risen from a long illness; her limbs ached strangely; her head felt curiously light and confused; every now and then a faintness seemed creeping over her, and she clung to the crazy baluster with both hands.

The house was still—still as death itself, she thought; and yet the surging and noise in her ears went on. Once she thought Will was calling to her, "Dym, Dym, my dear!" She slid on to her knees and gasped for breath when she

heard that, and, holding her hands tightly over her burning forehead, whispered out a prayer that God would be good to her and give her strength to see Will again.

She felt better after that, and turned the handle of the parlor door. Some vague instinct told her she should find him there, sitting with clasped hands and smiling white face, as she had seen him last, and she stood stupefied and dizzy for a moment, looking round the dark empty room, till the gleam of light from under the folding-doors recalled her.

They had taken him away; he would look different, somehow. She had scarcely strength to push the door open now; the lights, the whiteness, the awful straightness of the dim form under the sheet, the paraphernalia of the death-chamber, seemed to freeze her faculties and turn her into stone.

How long she would have stood there she never knew, only a little hunched-up figure, sitting at the foot of the bed, slowly shuffled round to her and slid a soft little hand in hers.

"Don't be afraid; there is nothing to be afraid of, father says. Come and look at him; he is smiling like one of God's dear angels he used to tell us about." And Dick drew her forward, and folded back the white covering.

"Smiling like one of God's dear angels." Thanks, little Dick, for those brave words. Now the hot pain beats less fiercely in her temples; tears that bring their own healing blot out the dear face again and again.

"Would you deprive me of such a welcome as that?" he had said to her. Ah, no need to question that welcome now! The furrows of pain had smoothed out of that calm brow; peace unutterable, profound, yet full of mystery, lay on the closely-folded lips and on the white carved face. There he lay, the young soldier of the Cross, called out from the battle in the very burden and heat of the day. Some one had crossed the meek arms over his breast, and laid a cluster of leaves and spring flowers within the hands; one of these had got loosened and disarranged. Dym picked it up, and placed it carefully back again—it was a green rowan spray.

On the day of the funeral they brought her his Bible, his gold Cross and pocket-book, and a lock of soft fair hair that Susan had cut off when he lay in his coffin.

Dym was forced to own herself ill now: a strange fever and

helplessness were upon her. Since the night when they had found her lying with her face hidden on the dead man's breast, and her arms clasped so tightly round his neck that they had some trouble to loosen them, and had carried her back to her little bed, she had never seen him again.

Sometimes in the night a sort of delirium came on, and she would try to go down and seek him. Little Dick saw her once standing with loosened hair and shining eyes in the middle of her room, her body swaying to and fro from weakness.

"Come, let us go to him," she said, holding out a hot hand to the boy. "What was that you said, Dick?—'Smiling like one of God's dear angels'—yes, I remember. We shall not waken him, Dick, none of us; I only want to sit beside him and look at him again."

Dick called his mother, and they laid her down again. "Not to-night, dearie; you must not try to-night." And Dym would cry out in a bitter voice, "They are keeping me from you, Will. Oh, Will, your poor little Dym!—your poor little unhappy Dym!" and her hands would beat the air weakly. Sometimes she would be quieter, and let Susan hush her to sleep; the fond woman would rock the girl's head on her bosom till drowsiness overpowered her grief. Dym would moan out fragments of talk. Once she thought she was in her brother's arms again.

"Oh, Will, I do love you—I do love you so!" she said, pressing Susan's rough hands closer to her. Her cheeks were wet with tears when she awoke, but her face had a more peaceful expression on it.

It was the day of the funeral, but they did not dare to tell her so till afterwards; the dog sat whining on her bed half the day, and once he took hold of her sleeve and tried to drag her with his teeth. Dym was too dull and sick to notice the animal's restlessness; she lay torpid and half asleep, unmindful of the unusual sounds about the house.

Little Dick came in once with his eyes swollen with crying. He had just come home with his father, and had hung his linnet's cage with black. Dym heard the bird's chirping in a dismal sort of way, under the veil of premature night.

Richard Maynard had followed, and so had many of the parishioners. The old vicar of St. Jude's had read the service. Quite a crowd of women and children had followed the poor priest to his resting-place. Some navvies to whom he

had done a kindness, and the elder lads from the night-schools, carried the bier. Not one of the friends he loved stood beside his grave; and yet there were no lack of mourners—the children he had baptized followed hand-in-hand, and flung little garlands of simple grasses and field-flowers on the coffin as it was lowered from their sight; the tears ran down many a woman's face; the men and boys dragged rough sleeves across their eyes. "He was the poor man's priest; we shall never get such another," said one of them; and a woman who heard it answered, "Ay, but he was too good for the likes of us; it is the best that is taken; there is not one of us women that haven't lost a friend."

Dym never spoke when they told her, only she turned very white; she clutched the things they brought her, and held them tight; that little worn Bible was dearer to her than anything else, except the lock of soft hair. Dym slept that night holding them still.

It was some days before she ventured to open the pocket-book. There were only a few simple memoranda, money accounts, a visiting-list, addresses of parishioners who had lately moved; there was nothing but the dear handwriting to make it valuable.

Dym was closing it carefully, when a little folded paper dropped out of one of the pockets. She opened it; there was a withered flower—pressed carefully—and under it, in Will's handwriting, "Given to me by Honor, on her wedding-day, May —, 185—. *Qui patitur vincit.*"

Why does Dym suddenly flush up, and press the flower hurriedly to her lips and bosom? Why does she call out Will's name, in those troubled loving tones, as she kindles a light, and watches as the paper and its inclosure crackle into ashes? Has she found out his secret?

"It is all safe with me, dear; no one shall know. Oh, Will! my darling—my darling, to think of this!" And then she whispered softly through her tears, as though he could hear her, that it is so brave to die and make no sign; that she loved him all the dearer for it; that he was her own Will Conqueror still!

Ay, Conqueror; and how nobly she will never know. *Qui patitur vincit.*

CHAPTER XXIX.

"SOME DAYS MUST BE DARK AND DREARY."

AND so the weeks go on.

Dym sickens and gets well, and broods silently over her sorrow, and spends long hours sitting in Will's chair with the little worn Bible in her lap, fingering the pages, but never reading, and looking with heavy lustreless eyes at the blazing streets outside. How long has she sat there?

It is June sunshine now, they tell her; the flower-girls hold up bunches of roses and carnations as they pass. Will's plants droop their heads thirstily as Dick waters them; the linnets flutter and chirp in the hot area below; Kiddle-a-wink basks on a bit of sunny pavement, and the splash of water from Susan's washing-tub seems to drip endlessly on the flags outside; but nothing rouses Dym from her listlessness, or from that dreary fingering.

Friends came about her in her trouble. Anna von Freiligrath sits in the little parlor for hours, turning the heel of a huge gray stocking, and chattering kind little commonplaces. Anna clasped her in her sturdy arms, and positively wept over her, when Dym came in in her black dress with her passive white face. "*Ach Himmel!* how thou art changed, *mien Liebling!*" she bursts out, with a little effusion of grief and sympathy; but Anna can make nothing of her, neither can Mrs. Tressilian when she drives up in her fine carriage and tries to take Dym away with her. Dym thanks them all, they are very good to her, but she would rather stay where she is; she is not lonely, she tells them; she has Susan, and little Dick, and Kiddle-a-wink; there is nothing she wants except—and here she breaks off and covers her face with her hand, and the tears splash down on her black dress—she only wants to be alone with him, so she sobs out, only alone with him.

"But you will make yourself ill, my child," says Mrs. Tressilian, with motherly tones; she is quite moved from her usual apathy. "Mrs. Maynard, my good creature, she will

make herself sick again if she stops in this close room. What will my sister say, and all of them? And I have promised to look after her!"

"Oh, no, no! leave me with Susan; Susan will take care of me," returned the girl, wrapping the homely arms round her. When Mrs. Tressilian had driven away, she put up her hand and stroked Susan's face.

"You will take me to see it to-day, dear, won't you? I am sure I am strong enough now." And Susan, who has not the heart to refuse her anything, consents after a little demur.

Dym ties on her bonnet wearily, and they go out into the sunshine, and Dick goes with them—Dick, whose little face grows every day paler and more shrunken, but who never complains that his crutches are too heavy for him, or that he coughs and catches his breath oddly at night. The people look after the girl as she passes along the streets with her homely companions. Something in the stricken white face, in the soft dark eyes, in the air of refinement that pervades her, seems to attract them. Dick shoulders his crutch and puts back his cap in quite a manful manner, as he hobbles along by Dym's side.

"You will be sure to like it, it is so pretty; full of green trees and white crosses, and with little flower-beds where the children are; he used to like it too; he told me so." And Dick hunched his shoulders and winked away a tear or two.

Yes, Dym liked it; once she and Will had walked there, and he had pointed out a little corner which he said was his favorite corner. There was a little clump of trees, and a seat, and a tiny lawn with a sweetbrier hedge; one or two children's graves were near it. They had laid him not far from this place. The wind had strewn some rose-leaves over the grass mound; a garland hung half withered on the slim cross. Anna Freiligrath and Edith had put it there; there was a little basket of roses and fresh moss lying on the turf. How quiet and sweet it was! Roses were blooming, green trees waved, a gleam of white crosses shone in the sunshine; overhead was a tender blue sky, birds were singing, more garlands waving. Some children came up with a pot of arum lilies, and looked pitifully at the girl sitting in the grass with the crippled boy beside her.

"I am glad we came here, very glad," she said, when the

sun had set, and Susan had spoken some word as to the lateness of the hour. She would have sat on there till nightfall, with her cheek resting against the soft turf; but at Susan's gentle hint she rose at once.

"Good-by, dear. I shall come again; it has done me good," Dick heard her whisper. She looked back once as the great gates swung on them: there lay the still garden,—God's acre, as it is fitly called; through the trees shone a radiance and golden glory of clouds; the sun was sinking behind the little chapel; a pale crescent moon rose in the evening blue; a rose-laden wind blew across the dewy lawns; the paths had a white glitter of their own; a stone angel drooped its wings under an acacia-tree—some one had laid a great white lily at its feet. The gate clanged after them; before them was a dusty interminable road, people coming and going, whips cracking, jaded horses coming up the hill, a great red sun dazzling in the west.

"I am glad I came," says Dym, looking out before her with grave unseeing eyes; "it has taken a little of the pain away to see it so quiet and restful. Do you know the words that kept recurring to my mind all the time?—'Let us go, that we may die with him.' Oh, Susan, I did so long to lie down and have done with it all!"

"You mustn't feel that, dearie."

"See how far that mile-stone is from us: we seem scarcely to move, and yet I suppose we shall reach it some time. How long is it since—since I came to you that Saturday?"

"A month to-day. Richard was only saying so this morning."

"A month—only four slow weeks? Oh, Susan, to think I am not twenty yet, and that I am longing to have done with it all!"

"There is the mile-stone," breaks in Dick, with a child's literal interpretation of facts.

"But it is not my mile-stone, Dick," replies Dym, with a curious sad smile. How will she ever make them understand the sick loathing that has come upon her? Is she a "shadow in a world of shadows"? Are those really living people, with flesh and blood, with pains and aches and smiling faces, coming towards them out of the sunshine? Have any of them left a brother lying out on the hill yonder? When she is old and withered, will her heart wither too—will she cease to suffer?

How long will she have to go on like this, with only Susan and little Dick for her companions—a month only? Have they forgotten her at Mentone? Mrs. Chichester has only written once—a hurried shocked letter, brimming over with sympathy, and begging Dym to put herself under Mrs. Tressilian's care. Dym had read it languidly, but it never came into her mind to answer it. "These are sad days with us all, and I have nothing comforting to say about my son; only the poor baby thrives"—that was all Mrs. Chichester wrote. He was too ill to send her a message, then; probably they had not yet told him he had lost his friend. There was no mention of Humphrey at all. That letter, loving as it was, added a still keener pang to the girl's pain as she read it. No, she could not write—not yet, at least. Presently, when she was stronger, and could bear to speak of her troubles.

But Dym was thinking of them all as she walked along, with one hand holding up her black dress and the other grasping the withered garland.

Dick was dragging himself wearily along on his crutches; Dym's gown dropped by and by, and trailed in the gray dust. A clock struck; a church-bell sounded in the distance; the streets were full of children, as usual—of shrill young voices, of dissonant tones; the women sat working on their doorsteps; the monastery chimes rang out from the brown straggling building in Maitland Park. Are these monks real monks, with sandaled feet and shorn heads, Dym wonders? A little thin Sister of Mercy, with fluttering veil and dusty cloak, comes round the corner; a pair of smiling eyes look at her out of a wrinkled pale face; the bell ceases, and the little Sister goes on quicker, with hurried toddling steps. Dym thinks she would like to be a Sister; a sudden memory comes across her of a convent-garden she has once seen.

The bell is ringing out for vespers. There is a straight long lawn and tall lilies; the nuns come down a lime-walk; there is a sudden shadowy gleam of black and white; the sun is setting behind a low gray building, with a passion-flower climbing round a porch; up-stairs there are more lilies; a shining altar; low chanting; down the whitewashed passages come more black and white figures, and pass into the fragrant chapel. Well, there are places here, scores of them, for empty lives and open yearning hands. Dym thinks, with a sudden

heartache, that she is not good enough, as she goes slowly up the steps.

Susan says her dear young lady is very tired and must lie down a little, but Dym shakes her head. There is not a speck of color in her face. As she enters the shadowy little parlor, somebody, standing with his back to the light, starts forward with an exclamation as the dusty little figure comes wearily in:

"Miss Elliott! Oh, my poor child!"

Dym gives a great sob when she sees Humphrey's honest face. They have not forgotten her, then. The little room seems brightened somehow as those kindly eyes greet her in the twilight, as the rugged brown hand stretches itself out. Dym holds it for a moment between both of hers.

"Oh, Humphrey, dear good Humphrey, you have come to me!"

"They sent me; I wanted to come. I am so glad, if you think I shall be of any use to you."

Humphrey can hardly frame his clumsy sentences as those little hands clutch hold of his coat-sleeve. He can scarcely bear to look at the small white face and troubled eyes brimming over with tears.

"I do not know whether you can be of any use to me, but I am glad you have come."

Dym's gladness threatened to become hysterical; she almost clung to the kind friend who had come all these miles to find her in her trouble.

"Oh, Humphrey, it is such terrible loneliness! but I know you will be good to me," she said, looking at him in a pitiful childish way.

Humphrey had need of all his fortitude before he could apply himself to soothe her.

"I will do my best for you; you know that, Dym," he said, looking at her with mournful eyes.

Humphrey seemed older than ever in his black clothes. His forehead was deeply lined, and the hard-featured face had a sallow tint on it. No wonder, after what he had gone through, that Humphrey looked almost ill. The faithful creature had traveled night and day ever since they had given him leave to seek her.

"I don't know whether she will be glad to see me, but I

feel I ought to go," he had said to Mrs. Chichester; "she may be ill, or wanting something."

"Perhaps she may have gone to Celia's. Do you think Guy can spare you?" answered the poor mother, doubtfully.

But her words, low as they were, reached her son's ears.

"Let him go, mother; he ought to go. There is nothing that he or any one else can do for me; it is different with her."

And Guy Chichester walked up and down the long room with fierce impatient strides, as he had walked night and day, his mother thought, as she listened to those never-ending footsteps.

So Humphrey had gone without sleep, taking it by snatches, and had traveled back through the weary miles, hardly daring to expect a welcome. But he never forgot to his dying day the quiver of light that came over the weary face as Dym ran up to him with outstretched hands, and called him "her dear good Humphrey."

She laid aside her bonnet now, with its dusty crape trimmings. Humphrey watched her hurriedly smoothing her soft hair with her hands and straightening the little frill round her neck.

"See who has come to me, Susan," she said, turning round with a sad smile as Mrs. Maynard came in. "They have not forgotten me; they have sent him."

And the girl laid her head on Susan's shoulder and cried a little, out of sheer oppression of thankfulness. Will would be glad Humphrey had come to her, she thought. Humphrey's eyes had a dumb hungry look in them as the tears streamed over the sweet face. Susan might pet and comfort her, but he could only stand aloof and make useless offers of help. Humphrey was growing sad again, when Dym suddenly held out her hand to him, as though to entreat his forgiveness.

"I cannot help it, Humphrey, it has been such pain; and now I don't feel quite so terribly lonely. You will tell me all about them presently, will you not?" And then she brushed her tears away, and busied herself in helping Susan to prepare the meal for the tired traveler.

Humphrey protested that he did not need either meat or drink; but Dym would not believe him. When Susan lighted the lamp, she drew the easy-chair to the table, and pressed the

viands on him with trembling eagerness. Humphrey wanted to wait on her instead.

"Do let me. If you know what it is to have some one of whom to take care again—I have missed that more than all. I—he——"

Humphrey nearly choked over his first morsel, as Dym buried her head on her hands and sobbed.

She hurried away after that, and had it out by herself. These sick longings would come upon her suddenly. "O Will, I shall never take care of you again. You don't want me now," she would say at such times.

She came back with the same worn gentle look, and sat down by Humphrey. "Now you will tell me," she said in a low voice. "I want to hear everything—everything."

"There is not much to tell," Humphrey says.

He goes over the sad story as curtly as he dare, and yet he feels an odd relief in telling it.

Dym did not interrupt, except by a question or two. She sat leaning forward, with her cheek on her hand, and her eyes fixed on Humphrey's face. Sometimes a tear rolled down, and she forgot to wipe it away. That fixed sad gaze made it difficult to Humphrey to go on; now and then he faltered and almost broke down.

"How did it happen?" Dym asked; "at the baptism?"

"Yes, she took cold then," Humphrey answered; "some one had left a door or window open—the nurse, he believed. She was sitting up, and over-excited or fatigued. Guy noticed her shiver when he came in and put the baby in her arms; but she said it was nothing, and he forgot it afterwards. The clergyman and his wife came in and talked to her, and after a time she had seemed very tired. Guy lifted her back to bed again; but she did not feel inclined to sleep. When the doctor came in he found her still talking, with two spots of color in her cheeks, and her eyes shining like gray stars, and had scolded them both. Honor had pleaded that the baby might be left with her; but he had sternly ordered it away. 'We must have no more excitement; you must go to sleep,' he said quite angrily; and then he muttered something about the want of common sense in people.

"Honor gave a quaint little smile when she was left alone.

"'I did want baby so,' Guy heard her say. The gray eyes

would not close; they were smiling wide open at Guy as he leaned over her some time afterwards, and then again he noticed the shiver.

"But still he was not alarmed," Humphrey said, "and retired to bed as happy as usual; but towards morning they had called him. The doctor must be sent for, they told him in frightened voices; she was very uneasy, and in great pain, but had begged them not to wake him before.

"Guy rushed into his wife's room. She was evidently in great suffering. There was a troubled—almost scared—look in her eyes; but they grew calm when she saw him.

"'Come here, Guy; nurse says I have taken cold. Can it be that that is the matter with me? I feel so strange.'

"Guy strove to hide the anguish that assailed him; he took her in his arms and soothed and comforted her. They say the dear beautiful smile came to her lips every time she looked at him," added Humphrey, in a choked voice.

"But, alas, sharp inflammation had set in, and for a short hour she knew no one. 'Where is our little child? Where is our baby, Guy?' she kept asking; and then she went murmuring on in disconnected sentences about broken crystals, and white robes, and cleansing waters. 'They have washed my baby quite clean,' she kept saying. 'The cross was all bubbles and brightness; I saw it sparkle. Don't let any one kiss the water away—my little Florence—my own baby.'

"She seemed sinking into a lethargy at last, and some one said she was going. The words seemed to rouse her, for she opened her eyes full on her husband's heart-broken face.

"'Oh, Guy, is it that?' they heard her whisper; 'not that, husband?'

"'My darling, I fear so.'

"'Must I leave you and baby?' and as, unable to speak, he supported her on his breast, she made a sign that he should kiss her.

"'Oh, it has been so beautiful!' Those were the last words that those standing round her could catch; but Guy, bending his ear to her lip, heard a faint sigh, 'Not my will;' and then somebody came behind him and laid her down."

Dym's face was hidden now, and there was a long silence.

"How did he bear it?" she asked at last, almost in a whisper.

Humphrey shook his head sorrowfully.

"He has not borne it; he has fought against it so, that for the first three weeks we almost thought he would lose his reason. He says such things that his mother goes out of the room shuddering; but he is quieter now."

"Has he been ill?"

"Mentally ill, of course; he sleeps badly, and wakes in a strong fever. He is beginning to look haggard and gray; no one can do anything with him—his mother least of all."

"Poor Mrs. Chichester!"

"Madam does her best, to give her her due. She bears his fierce humors as an angel would; but her tears anger him. Once or twice she brought the baby to him—poor lady, she knew no better; but he just flung away, and shut himself up for nearly twenty-four hours at a stretch."

"O Humphrey, is it possible that he does not care for his child?"

"It is too early days to talk of that now, poor little lamb; she will grow into his heart by and by. They say she has Honor's eyes. You see he has got it into his head that the babe has cost her her life; he has never taken her into his arms since."

"I can understand just how he feels."

"But he looks at her sometimes when he thinks no one sees him. I saw him once standing by her cot, with his arms folded over his chest. 'Our little child,' I heard him mutter—'yes, she said that—will she grow up an angel too? O baby, I think I should kill myself—I should, I must, to get rid of all this misery—if it were not for the fear I should not see her again;' and then his head fell forward on his arms with such a groan, and he let me lead him away. I stopped with him all night. Somehow I did not dare to leave him alone."

"O Humphrey, you ought not to have left him now."

"How could I help it?" stammered Humphrey; "he sent me. I have promised to go back again, if Madam wants me. She won't leave him just yet; but I can't help thinking he will break away from us altogether soon. He gave Madam such a look when she ventured to suggest his coming back to Ingleside."

Dym gave a heavy sigh. He would go away from them all. "He will come back, my girl; I know him so well: these

noble souls are not left to wander away in outer darkness." Ah, she could almost hear Will say these words! How often in the months, nay, years to come, she recalled them with a strange feeling of comfort; through what dreary experiences was their Sintram passing, while the mother prayed Verena-like through her tears—the mother on earth and the wife in paradise weaving the twofold cord that was to bring him home again!

Humphrey went away as soon as his sad story was finished. Dym made him promise to come again early the next day; he should take her to St. Luke's, she thought. When the morning came she sat in her old place beside him, with her heavy crape veil falling over her face; the lilac sunshine was flooding the chancel again; outside the poplars waved. A stranger knelt in Will's place.

"Are you sure this has been good for you?" asked Humphrey, somewhat conscience-striken, as the girl put back her veil and looked at him.

Dym had dark circles round her eyes; but a gentle light shone from under the reddened eyelids.

"I could hear his voice all through; we had his favorite Psalms to-day. You were very good to take me, Humphrey," pressing his arm softly.

Dym made him take her somewhere else, too. Her tongue loosened as she sat on the grass beside Will's grave, fingering the daisies lovingly: she poured out the whole history of her trouble into Humphrey's ears as he stood beside her.

"Ay, ay, poor child, poor child!"

Humphrey did not say much more, though his honest heart was overflowing with sympathy. Yet Dym thought his kindness was perfect.

Humphrey had yielded himself quite submissively to the girl's will throughout the day; but on the following morning things were otherwise.

"I ought to have given you this before," he said, somewhat abruptly, producing a letter from his pocket. Dym was dusting and straightening Will's books, and a volume of Hooker dropped from her fingers as she caught sight of Mrs. Chichester's handwriting.

"Madam wrote it in a hurry," continued Humphrey, thrusting his hands into his shooting-coat, and assuming an

indifference he did not feel; "she hopes you will decide on remaining at her sister's till her return, as it will be so lonely for you at Ingleside."

"She has given me my choice," returned Dym, disconsolately. "Oh, why, why will they not leave me alone? Write to her, Humphrey; tell her I am happier here."

"Nay, nay, you must not ask me to do that," returned Humphrey, puckering up his brow with the air of a man who has a tough job before him; "you'll only fret out your heart stopping on here, and turning over his things all day long, as Mrs. Maynard says you have been doing. Come," he added, coaxingly, "you will be a good child and go to Mrs. Tressilian's."

"I cannot," replied Dym, bursting into tears. "Why is every one so cruel? Mrs. Chichester does not want me—nobody wants me!" with a little outburst of impatience and despair that goes to Humphrey's heart; but he steels his tenderness and answers her very gravely.

"You ought not to have said that to me; but you did not know what you were saying, did you, my dear? You are so young that you cannot judge for yourself in this; you must let me decide for you, as though I were your—your brother," stammered out poor Humphrey, not thinking how bitterly the word would sound to the bereaved girl.

"No, you can never be that. I have no brother but Will—no one but Will. Oh, my darling, to think you will never help me to be good again!"

Humphrey had to wait till the girl's grief had spent itself a little, and then he returned to the subject very gently but firmly.

"I wish you had some one better to advise you," he said very sadly; "but I will not go away and leave you like this. Madam is right—you are not fit to take care of yourself."

"Susan will take care of me. Oh, Humphrey, why will you be so hard on me? I would be so good if you will only let me stop here."

But Humphrey shook his head.

"It cannot be done. I have passed my word to put you under Mrs. Tressilian's protection, or to see you safe at Ingleside."

Humphrey's manner has a trifle of austerity in it, all the more that he feels his resolution melting.

"I will go to Ingleside, then," returned Dym, in a low voice.

She was a little scared at Humphrey's peremptoriness; she turned paler, and her head drooped on her breast as Humphrey quietly told her that she must prepare to go back with him on the morrow.

"I have my work to see after: everything is at a stand-still; the home-farm is without a bailiff," finished Humphrey, apologetically.

But Dym turned away from him. He had been hard to her; he would not write and ask permission for her to stay; every one treated her like a child, Humphrey worst of all, though he loved her. Dym went away in a little fury of despair, leaving poor Humphrey crestfallen over his victory.

It was a miserable day for every one. Humphrey wandered about the streets, and came back again to find Dym quietly crying over her work, with Susan helping her; through the half-opened door he could see the little black figure kneeling before a pile of clothes and books; Dick was standing by; Susan seemed to be expostulating.

"I wouldn't do it, dearie; leave them for Richard and me to manage; it doesn't seem right; it is morbid-like, and unchristian."

"These are the shirts I made for him, Susan; and look at that poor old coat with the rent under the arm. I usen't to like to see him in it, but he never would part with it—never. Fold it up carefully, Susan, with the others. I tell you I must take them."

Susan sighed and shook her head. In another moment there was a heavy stride in the next room, and the folding-door was pushed open.

"Give that to me, please, Mrs. Maynard; that and the others. I will not have it done." Humphrey spoke quite sternly, and there was a frown on his face. "You ought not to allow Miss Elliott to do things that are bad for her—you, who are her friend, should know better than that."

"She won't mind us, sir; one can't be hard on the poor lamb," said Susan, in a disturbed voice.

"Humphrey, go away; you have no right to interfere with me!" exclaimed the poor child, putting out a feverish hand to stop him; but Humphrey took hold of it, and suddenly lifted her up.

"I will not have it done," he repeated, firmly. "You are wearing yourself out, and you have no one to take care of you. You must not move till I give you leave." And to Dym's infinite amazement she found herself placed on the couch and covered with Humphrey's rug.

"Susan and I will pack the books," was all he said as he went out of the room. Dym lay looking after him in a curious sort of way. He had taken the things from her hand, and had thrown them aside; he had put her out of the way, as though she had been a mere infant; and yet she was not angry; she had never liked him better than when he had stood by her with a frown on his face and then had tenderly stooped and lifted her in his strong arms. There was something healing in the rough tenderness that had interposed between her and that weary labor.

I think, if Humphrey Nethecote had been another sort of man, he might almost have won Dym at this time. The girl was so lonely and unhappy that she would have clung to any strong arm that had offered itself for her support. In the months that followed she felt for him a quiet tenderness, which might have ripened into love, if he had only been less humble with her and had shown her the more dominant side of his character. Dym could not love where she did not reverence strongly. Humphrey was good, kindness itself, as she assured herself over and over again; but there was something wanting. His great love made him timid and self-deprecating.

Once, many months afterwards, when a sort of dry fever of hopelessness came over the girl—when there seemed nothing left to live for, and only the dull level of existence lay before her—a sudden impulse came into her mind that she would make this man happy who had loved her and served her so faithfully.

It was one of those perilous thoughts that sometimes come into a girl's mind, and might have worked her mighty woe in the years to come, if Humphrey's generosity had not saved them both.

She had said some word that the man could hardly mistake, and Humphrey had looked at her incredulously for a moment, and then a sudden tinge of red had come into his sallow face.

"Do you mean this, my dear?"

"Yes, I think so," Dym replied, looking at the strong

homely features, working with emotion; but her voice had a fixed weary tone in it. "Everything is very miserable, but I should like to make you happy, Humphrey."

"God bless you!" was all he said for a moment. But as he took her in his arms a shiver passed over her, for she thought he had taken her at her word; but she need not have feared him.

"I will try to be good to you," she whispered; but there was a chill sick feeling at her heart, that ought to have warned her.

"You are always good to me; don't be afraid. I shall never forget this—never; but you must not come to me; you do not love me, my dear."

"Not much—not in that way," she stammered, crimsoning under that honest gaze; "but I thought it would be nice to make you happy."

"You would not make me happy; don't you understand we should both be miserable?—unless you cared for me."

"I shall love you all the more dearly for this," as Dym shrank away from him almost timidly; "but no man ought to marry a woman who does not love him."

Humphrey was quite hot and dusty when he came up to Dym's couch in the late afternoon.

"We have finished; Maynard is cording the boxes. You must not be angry with me, Miss Elliott, because I have taken this into my own hands."

"I am not angry," said Dym, slipping her hand into his with a sweet smile. "Why do you call me Miss Elliott? I am very much obliged to you, Humphrey; it is I who have been wrong. I ought not to have given you so much trouble."

Humphrey was quite taken aback by the girl's humility and gentleness.

Humphrey had no more trouble with her after that; next morning she took leave of her humble friends, and was very quiet and dry-eyed when he put her into the carriage. Little Dick climbed up for a last embrace, and Susan had her apron up to her eyes.

"Good-by; you have all been so good to me," faltered Dym.

The sun streamed down on the dusty pavement; the women came to their doors and looked after the retreating carriage.

Dym, leaning back and closing her eyes, saw a quiet face with an ineffable smile stamped upon it, and knew that, wherever she went, one day she should see it again, "smiling at her like one of God's dear angels."

Dym was too weary to say much to Humphrey when he parted from her at the door of Ingleside. The servants went down-stairs and spoke pityingly of the young creature who looked so changed and pale in her deep mourning; even Mrs. Fortescue melted at the sight of the sad young face, and kissed her quite affectionately. Dym, who was yearning for love and sympathy, never forgot that kiss.

Dym would have been puzzled if any one had asked her how she spent her days. Humphrey came often, but he did not stay long; and by and by he went back to Mentone. Mr. Chichester had been seized with a low fever, which prolonged their stay; but as soon as he was able to bear the fatigue, Humphrey went to remove them to a cooler place; and by slow stages and frequent pauses he hoped to bring them safely to England by the middle of August.

Dym wrote long letters to Mrs. Chichester, and took endless walks with Kiddle-a-wink, and grew more miserable every day; she was longing for her friends—pining for them; and the delay grew more sickening each hour.

"We are coming home," wrote Humphrey at last to her, and Dym's heart gave a sudden bound; but as she read the next few words it sank lower and lower; "if all be well we shall be with you in another forty-eight hours—that is, Madam and the nurse and baby; but the squire has suddenly made up his mind to take a sea-voyage: he talks of going out by one of the Peninsular and Oriental steamers to Calcutta.

"He has shaken off the effects of his illness, but looks languid still. I think, for Madam's sake, it is a pity that the doctors have put this notion of a sea-voyage into his head. for if he once get away from us one can never know when he will come back again. I think it is better to face trouble than to run away from it, as he has done all his life," finished Humphrey, in his blunt way.

As Dym opened this letter, a note dropped out and fell to the ground. Dym's hand fairly shook as she picked it up, and the color rushed to her face, for she recognized Mr. Chichester's handwriting:

"My dear Miss Elliott,—Perhaps you have thought that I might have written before; but what is there that we can find to say to each other? There is only one person to whom, in all these four months, I could have borne to have spoken of my trouble, and that is your brother, and he is dead. Had he lived, I might have spent a lifetime at St. Luke's, trying to work out some of my misery, instead of vainly endeavoring to crush it out in miles of ocean. So you have lost him! I am grieved still more in my grief to know it; but be comforted; you are too young to break your heart, and life has something in reserve for *you*. I am sending my mother and child home to Ingleside. I know you will love and take care of them. Be my faithful little friend, still, and help my mother to forget some of her cares.

"God bless you! When you have a prayer to spare, you may waste it on one who is ever your true friend,

"Guy Latimer Chichester."

It was that letter, so curt, so tender, yet so bitter in its sorrow, that first roused Dym from the apathy of her own grief.

The harvest-fields were being reaped round Birstwith when Mrs. Chichester bade farewell to her son and came back to her solitary home, escorted by the faithful Humphrey.

Dym ran out on the sunny terrace to receive them, and just in time to see Humphrey assisting the foreign-looking nurse to descend from the carriage.

Dym stretched out her arms when she caught sight of the fluttering white cloak and dimpled hands. "Oh, give me the baby!" she cried; and as she stooped over it the child opened a pair of solemn gray eyes and smiled at her.

"Little Florence, little Florence, how I shall love you!" whispered Dym; and, for the first time since Will's death, something like returning happiness stole into her face.

CHAPTER XXX.

"ALL IN THE WILD MARCH MORNING."

THREE years and a half have passed away since the events recorded in the last chapter—more than three whole years since Guy Chichester took his passage in the "Montezuma" *en route* for Calcutta; and still Ingleside is without its master.

It is more than eighteen months now since they have heard from him.

And some who loved him well say that the brief unhappy life is finished, and that Guy Chichester will never come back to his own again.

Mr. Fortescue says so, and Cousin Katherine; and Humphrey even shakes his honest head more sadly every day when the squire's name is mentioned; and Beatrix Delaire puts on mourning, and cries her beautiful eyes quite dim for the cousin she has lost; but still the mother hopes and prays, and stretches out her arms to Dym when she comes in to wish her a grave good-night.

"What was it he said? tell me again, my dear." And Dym whispers the words, which have become a part of her creed: "He will come back, my girl; I know him so well: these noble souls are not left to wander away in outer darkness." And as Mrs. Chichester kisses her, and calls her her comforter, Dym's lip trembles, and her eyes fill with tears, for she knows that, whether he is dead or alive, the mother will never look upon her son's face again.

Mrs. Chichester has wept herself blind again.

"God bless dear papa, and bring him home to Flossie and gran'ma," lisps little Florence, night after night, at Dym's knee; and in the morning, when the solemn gray eyes open, she wakes Dym to ask, "Has papa come back yet?"

Florence knows her father's face by heart; she kisses it every night when she says her prayers. "Papa isn't pretty, like mamma or auntie," thinks Flossie; she likes mamma's face best. A tender image of that sweet mother is already

enshrined in the child's mind, a faint glory of shining raiment and white wings and smiling eyes, like the angel she sees at church. On Sunday evenings Dym takes her on her lap and tells her about that loving guardianship; she talks about her father on other evenings; but on these quiet Sabbath hours she speaks of Honor to Honor's child.

She and Florence exchanged confidences. Dym has quaint sweet theories of her own: it is to her an article of faith that Honor is watching over her little daughter. Florence is not quite sure about the wings—does auntie know? A grand beautiful lady, all in white, kissed her last night; Florence could see the stars shining round her head.

"Perhaps papa will come to-night," finishes Florence, sleepily; "but I like mamma's kisses best, only I think she was crying, for my face was quite wet in the morning." Dym holds her peace; she would not have told Florence for worlds that it was only a dream—that it was her kisses and tears that the child felt, when Dym was saying her prayers beside her in the moonlight.

Dym thinks of little Florence when she reads Nathan's story of the ewe lamb; for three years, ever since her foster-mother left the ten-months-old babe, Honor's child has slept in her bosom, and grown into her heart of hearts.

Dym does not know what she would have done all these years without the child! ever since the long illness through which she nursed her, and which threatened to extinguish the precious little life, Florence had seemed to belong to her more than to any one else. "They tell me her own mother could not have done more for her," wrote Guy Chichester, in one of those rare letters of his. "Heaven reward you for all your goodness to me and mine!"

Dym carried that letter about with her wherever she went. It was more than eighteen months since she received it: he was coming home then. He was sick and weary of wandering, so he said, and was longing, with a feverish longing that surprised himself, to see the child that death had so nearly snatched away from him. "I think it is a punishment on my own hard-heartedness," he wrote; "I ought not to have stayed away so long from Honor's child."

What had he been doing with himself those two years? His letters made the two women giddy to read them: now he

was tiger-hunting in the Indian jungles, now studying Hindostanee and teaching young natives in a missionary settlement; then he had made his way to Australia; when he last wrote, he had already taken his passage home in a vessel leaving Melbourne. It was the fate of that vessel, the "Rose and Crown," that made Beatrix Delaire put on mourning for her cousin, and that dimmed the mother's eyes with anguish; for, hundreds of leagues from land, right out on the blue Pacific, the noble ship had caught fire, and nearly every soul on board had perished miserably. One boat's crew had indeed escaped, and two of the survivors, who had contrived after innumerable hardships to reach one of the coral-reef islands, had within the last few months been interrogated by Humphrey at Liverpool, and, according to their account, Guy Chichester had been left in the burning vessel. One man there was, indeed, who had manned the boat with his fierce energy, and without whom not one of all that boatful would have survived to tell the tale, but even he had succumbed to the exhaustion of thirst and fever. "We dropped him down as decently as we could, and one of us said a bit of a prayer over him; but we had hardly strength to pitch the others overboard. Dawson here says his name was Leicester or Latimer." And Humphrey wringing the poor fellow's hand, turned away without a word, for he thought, and others thought too, that that dominant spirit among the boat-crew of despairing men was Guy Latimer Chichester. And Humphrey went up to Ingleside and told Dym—every one came to Dym now in their troubles; she was so gentle and helpful, she looked at them with such wistful kind eyes.

Dym was "Miss Elliott" still in the household, but Florence called her "Auntie." Uncle Humphrey had taught her to say it long ago, and Mrs. Chichester loved the name, for Dym was almost like her own daughter to the poor lady.

Dym shielded her face as she listened to Humphrey's story. Humphrey saw her shudder once, as though the strange coincidence of the name struck her; but when he had finished she uncovered her eyes and looked at him, and the lines of the mouth unbent slightly in their sweet gravity.

"Do you believe this was he, Humphrey?"

"Ay, surely; there can be no room for doubt, I fear."

"And you think he is lying miles below the Pacific; that he will never come home, never see his child again? We don't

believe that, do we, Kelpie?" stooping to caress the faithful creature that seemed to have transferred his affection to her. "You and I and Will know better than that."

"Why do you hope against hope?" persisted Humphrey, sadly. "I think you are wrong, Dym; I do indeed. It is false and cruel kindness to tell that poor woman her son is alive."

Humphrey spoke with unusual sternness, but his heart was very sore.

"If you withdraw that hope, she will die," returned Dym, gently but firmly. "Promise me you will not tell her this, Humphrey—what the sailor said, I mean: you have no idea how weak she is; it would kill her."

"I won't go against you," returned Humphrey, looking at her wistfully from under his bent brows. "Where do you get your faith, Dym?"

Dym gave him a little smile in answer.

"You and I and Will know better than that," she repeated, kneeling on the rug and putting her arms round the dog's neck when Humphrey had gone; and the faithful collie licked her hand as though he understood her question.

Sad news had lately came to them from Lansdowne House. Colonel Delaire had met with an accident in the hunting-field, and Anna von Freiligrath wrote that serious consequences were apprehended. The doctors feared there was some internal mischief, and the invalid seemed to think so too, for he was calmly putting his affairs in order.

The news came to them at Christmas, and cast an additional gloom over the little party. Mrs. Chichester had been ailing for some time; lately the indisposition had increased, and the inclement season kept her a prisoner in her own room.

It was there that Dym read Fräulein von Freiligrath's sad letter.

Afterwards they watched for every post anxiously; but it was the middle of February before their worst fears were verified.

Colonel Delaire had borne his protracted sufferings heroically. A little before his death he had sent for his wife.

No one had thought the end was so near; and she came to his bedside dressed for an assembly, with diamonds shining on her white neck and arms. Some of her friends had persuaded

her that her presence was indispensable at some gay gathering for an hour or two; and Beatrix, who found her husband's sick-room somewhat irksome, had yielded to their solicitations.

"You sent for me, Frank; do you feel worse?" she asked, a little anxiously. Perhaps she felt conscience-stricken.

"I think I do, my dear. I wanted to speak to you—that is, if you can spare me a few minutes," he added, with a shade of bitterness in his voice that stung through all her worldliness and selfishness. There was unconscious irony in his words, but he had not meant to be hard on this woman, who had disappointed and blighted his life; he would die in peace with her and with all the world, he thought. He strove to forget that but for her he would have lived long happy years of usefulness: this marriage had broken his career and ruined his happiness; domestic misery had made him more reckless of life than other men had been; he knew as they carried him home upon the stretcher that he had dared a useless leap to rouse himself from the sadness that preyed so continually upon him.

And yet how he had loved her! how her beauty had dazzled him!—it dazzled his dying hours now; for the sake of that glorious face and form he had bartered the peace of his life; her beauty had been ashes and bitterness to him, and yet he loved her still.

No, he would not be hard on her; but one word he did say of sorrow and regret.

"It is all over with me, Beatrix. You might have been a little more patient, dear. I should not have troubled you long" —looking at her dress meaningly; it was his only reproach.

"I think we may as well say good-by to each other," he went on. "We have not been happy together: it was more my fault than yours; I ought not to have made you marry me; you never loved me, Trichy; but it is too late to speak of that now."

"Yes, it was too late," thought Beatrix, as she stood beside him dry-eyed and speechless. She felt conscience-stricken and abashed before this simple kindly gentleman; she could not lie to him, she dared not affirm she had ever loved him. "Yes, it is too late to talk of that, Frank," she said, dragging the diamond bracelet on her arm, and not venturing to look at him.

Some hours later she stood there still, shivering in her gay ball-dress. Some one noticed her shudder, and threw a cloak over her, but she shook her head and put it away with feverish fingers—she was not cold.

Guy Chichester thought he had tasted the bitterest dregs that pain could offer when Honor's arms dropped heavily about his neck; but even his misery was less intense than Beatrix's as she stood with hot dry eyes beside her husband's death-bed.

She did not venture to approach him; others, mere hirelings, pressed round him, and rendered him the necessary offices. Was it for her to touch him, who had never loved him? who had neglected his sick-bed? whose forgiveness she had never asked or sought?

"Now, my men, for a last charge!" were his final words; and so the gallant soul stormed up the heights of death.

Dym generously forgot her old repugnance, and wrote to Beatrix in her trouble. There was still an unspoken antagonism between these two; but Beatrix was older now, a woman of the world, and she no longer showed her dislike openly to her aunt's companion; perhaps it was no longer safe to do so, for Dym's position at Ingleside was wholly unassailable. Even at Lansdowne House, and in her daughter's presence, Mrs. Tressilian petted and made much of her, and Beatrix had ceased to rebuke.

"You will all repent it one day," was the only speech she made to her mother. To Miss Elliott she was perfectly civil; once or twice she had made some slight advance, but Dym had never cordially responded—to the end of her life she mistrusted Mrs. Delaire.

Dym's aptitude for nursing was greatly needed this winter. Mrs. Chichester did not rally from her indisposition; on the contrary, she grew weaker and weaker. Dr. Grey shook his head when he came out of the sick-room; there was no disease of which to speak, but a lamentable want of power, surprising in a woman of her constitution.

"There is no real wish to rally; this is purely inanition and a depressed state of the nerves," he said once quite impatiently to Dym, who had followed him down-stairs. Humphrey, who was waiting in the hall to hear his report, joined them in the porch.

"That is what Miss Elliott says," he interrupted. "We cannot get Madam to take interest in anything; it is 'Do as you like, I am too tired to think,' from one week's end to the other."

"It must be checked," returned Dr. Grey, decidedly. "There is no knowing what mischief may result when the patient is once allowed to sink into this state. She must be roused, interested in spite of herself, or there will be total collapse. The worst is, there is no remedy for the cause of all this; the only question is, whether any certainty would not be better than this state of hopeless suspense."

"That is what I say," put in Humphrey, with a glance at Dym, who was standing by the fire, smoothing her little silk apron thoughtfully.

Dym looked up quickly.

"No, no, Dr. Grey; don't let him say that; he is always telling me so. It would kill her; I am sure it would." speaking with her old energy.

"The question is whether she has really any hope remaining," returned Dr. Grey; "whether this indifference to everything does not mean that she has secretly relinquished it. Tell us, Miss Elliott—you are more with her than any one—do you think she believes her son is alive?"

"I don't know; she has not spoken of him lately," answered Dym, in a low voice. "She has got all his things about her; her bed was quite strewn yesterday with broken toys and books, and even baby-clothes. Florence was telling her what everything was when I came in. I wanted to put them away, but she would not let me."

"She thinks that they are relics," returned Dr. Grey, quickly. "I was right, you see; she never expects to have him back again."

"Oh, Dr. Grey, I never thought of that," answered Dym, and the tears sprang to her eyes; "but indeed, indeed, you are mistaken. I remember now Florence was saying her prayers to her, and she made her say that part over twice about her father coming back."

Dr. Grey shook his head; he was quite of another opinion.

"If you take my advice, you will try to find out exactly what she thinks. I believe with Mr. Nethecote that she knows already, and that she will be able to bear any certainty."

Dym was still standing by the fire when Humphrey came back from accompanying the doctor to the door. She turned to him with one of her worried looks.

"Humphrey, I can't bear this much longer—you all thinking me wrong, I mean; but some one else must tell her."

"Nay, surely no one understands her so well as you do, Dym."

"I cannot help that," with a touch of her old irritability; "if you and Dr. Grey persist in thinking it right, one of you must do it. It will not be a lie on your lips."

"Ay, whatever do you mean, Dym?"

"If I said he was dead, I should tell a lie; he is not dead—I feel it—I know it. What is the day of the month, Humphrey? I am beginning to forget everything." And she put her hand to her head in a confused tired way.

"It is the twenty-first of March," returned Humphrey, looking at her in surprise; "Madam's been ailing over three months now. Let me see, Flo will be four years old on the twentieth of next month."

"Yes, yes, I know. I was not thinking of that. It is just three years and seven months, then, since he went away; a year and seven months since we last heard. It is a long time, a very long time, Humphrey; no wonder you all lose hope."

"The only marvel is you haven't lost it too," replied Humphrey, in his gruffest tone; it made his heart ache to see how the girl clung to her belief; "but it is not any use; you will be obliged to let it go."

"Never! what are you talking about? I could not, I could not." Her eyes quite shone with excitement; her voice trembled and grew eager. "You may take away the last hope from that poor woman; I cannot prevent you—I dare not, if you think it right; but no one shall make me believe that he will not come back to his child one day."

Humphrey did not answer. Her earnestness staggered him in spite of himself. The squire alive still? a year and seven months, and yet he had not reached them? The idea was too improbable; it was contrary to all reason. He would have liked to argue the girl out of her obstinate belief; but he feared angering her. Dym's fire was only a sudden blaze, and it died out as soon as Humphrey left her.

"They will reason me even out of this, if I listen to them.

Why will they not leave me alone to believe what I like?" she said to herself, with a sudden spasm of doubt and misery. "Oh, Kelpie, do you really think your master is dead—really, really dead?" But, though the sagacious animal licked her hand in the same reassuring manner as before, she was not comforted.

Dym suddenly felt with a great terror that her hope was slipping from her. She had spoken bravely; but why did her heart all at once fail her? Was it that the suspense was becoming unbearable even to her? She had told Humphrey she would never believe he was dead; that it would be a lie on her lips if she said it to his mother. Why did her conscience accuse her of falseness? Had she meant what she said? Had she been utterly true? Had not her wish blinded her when she had so spoken?

Dym felt as though she were collapsing too; a sudden paralysis of fear was on her; her faith had received a shock in reality; the poor thing was weary and spent with nursing; fatigue and depression were wearing out her hopefulness. The body is often to blame for these moods. When Dym sat down with a little shiver and asked herself if she believed this thing or the other, she wanted to sleep away her fears.

It would have been a wonder if she had not been tired; she was too young and weak for such a responsibility; the strain of it was almost wearing her out.

Mrs. Chichester could hardly bear her to be out of the room. Dym schooled herself into brightness whenever she came near her friend. The poor invalid, in her blindness and helplessness, grew more dependent on her young companion every day. Dym's sweet voice never sounded tired in the sick-room; her light step—how it flagged when it crossed the threshold!—was like music to the ears that had grown to listen for it night and day; the soft touches that had once proved so soothing to Guy Chichester were never weary of manipulating the hot brow. Dym kept untiring vigils in the sick-room; she denied herself needful rest, trying to beguile the tedium of those long nights. Mrs. Chichester never slept till dawn; for some hours she was always wakeful and restless. Dym had grown into the habit of taking the earliest part of the night-watch; Dorothy sat and dozed quite placidly all the rest of the time. Mrs. Chichester would be waiting for her

now, she thought, with a touch of compunction at her idleness. Stewart came in to close the shutters as she rose wearily from her chair. "It is going to be a wild night, miss," he said, as Dym stood for a moment looking out at the black rain-clouds that were scudding across the sky. The wind was driving along the terrace and whistling fiercely among the gable-ends; the elms were creaking and straining their mighty limbs like angry giants; in the kitchen garden there was a flapping of bare boughs; that night the Nid was swollen, and lashed its banks with white froth. Later on the flood-gates of heaven seemed open, and a driving rain and mist filled the valley; a hollow moaning reverberated among the hills and echoed mournfully through the dim woods. Dym shivered as she passed the conservatory-door, for it reminded her of that evening, more than three years ago, when Humphrey, with pale face and dripping clothes, stood in that very place and told her Honor was dead. Dym found Florence curled up among her grandmother's pillows when she entered the sick-room; the little maid had stolen across the corridor with her little white night-gown and bare rosy feet, and now sat open-eyed and solemn, looking like a bright-eyed fairy perched at Mrs. Chichester's ear.

"Oh, Flossie, how naughty!"

Florence shook back the fair hair from her face, and argued the matter.

"Flo is not naughty; Flo's good."

"I am afraid not, my darling," and Dym finished her rebuke with a shower of kisses. "There, say good-night to grannie."

"Florence has been saying such dreadful things," said Mrs. Chichester, gathering the child fondly in her weak arms; "she has been making poor grandmamma so unhappy. She tells me she won't love papa any longer."

"Oh, Flo, for shame!"

"I think he is a naughty papa to stop away all this time," affirmed Flo, confidently. "I don't think he is good, like grannie and mamma and auntie. I like auntie best," she whispered, as Dym carried her away. Dym, gravely kissing the little face before she left it, felt to-night as though the child's words had stricken her to the heart. Even Flossie was tired of waiting.

"I think I feel more restless than ever to-night," sighed

Mrs. Chichester, as Dym sat down beside her. "Oh, that wind!"

"It is a rough lullaby, certainly," returned Dym, cheerfully, as she drew the heavy curtains closer, and looked to the fastening of the shutters, and then broke a blazing log into splinters. The white china tiles reflected the pleasant glow; the lamp burned brightly. Dym, as she read, stole a glance now and then at the white face lying on the pillow with blank open eyes, and thin hands fluttering aimlessly over the coverlet, and thought that, worn and faded as it had grown, it was beautiful still.

In spite of her efforts, Dym's voice would take tired tones now and then; her nerves were in a state of tension to-night; her reading was purely mechanical. Through it all she seemed to hear the dripping of the rain on the terrace as the wind lulled. Long before the usual hour Mrs. Chichester sent her away, pretending she could sleep; and Dym, with some reluctance, gave up her post to Dorothy.

It was her ordinary custom to go down and pat Kelpie and bid him good-night before she went to her room, and, however tired she was, she never omitted the custom; but to-night Kelpie was not stretched as usual on the black bear-skin in the library; he was whining restlessly at the foot of the stairs, as though he were weary of waiting for his young mistress.

Dym stooped down and caressed him; but, though he licked her hand gratefully, he continued visibly uneasy, and trembled in every limb.

"Why, Kelpie, old fellow, what ails you? I suppose the wind is making you nervous too. One o'clock, and the storm shows no signs of lulling," as the glass in the conservatory rattled and shook in its frame, and the hail beat fiercely on the terrace outside. "What an awful night!" she thought, glancing round the dimly-lighted hall rather fearfully.

"Lie down, good dog," she said, soothingly. But Kelpie resisted every effort to coax him to his bear-skin; on the contrary, his restlessness increased; he whined, looked up in Dym's face, ran towards the door, and commenced sniffing under it, and then threw back his head with a low prolonged howl.

The dog's behavior did not tend to reassure Dym; she knew

the collie's sagacity was rarely at fault. For some reason or other he wanted her to open the door; perhaps some one was outside, most likely a tramp. Dym's imagination did not stretch to the idea of housebreakers; she had been too long an inhabitant of the happy valley for such a notion to enter her head; but still she was all alone. There might be two tramps, perhaps, or even gipsies; she did not feel in the least disposed to open the door.

Again she attempted to coax Kelpie away; she even took hold of his collar, and tried to drag him with her two hands; but it was no use: the dog only growled at her reproachfully, and broke into a dismal howl. In another moment he would rouse the house.

"There can be no harm if I slip the chain and let him run through," she thought; "it is silly of me to be so frightened; perhaps, after all, it is only Sukey, or one of her pups, strayed up from the keeper's lodge." But for all that she was nervous, and bungled sadly over the bolts. She had miscalculated the distance, however: the dog, with all his efforts, could not squeeze himself through the aperture, and his bark of disappointment drove Dym's fears to the wind in the terror lest Mrs. Chichester should be alarmed. "Oh, hush, hush!" she cried, dropping the chain in desperation: she thought she could close the door quickly after him, but she had forgotten the wind. Kelpie had scarcely vanished into the darkness before a wild gust blew the door out of her hand, and drove her backward, pelting her face and dress with hailstones, and nearly lifting her off her feet.

All her strength could not have availed to close the heavy oak door; the servants slept far away, no one could hear her if she called; the lights were flaring, her hair and dress blew about wildly. All at once a low uncontrollable cry broke from her lips, and her knees trembled under her.

And why?

Because a warm human hand, groping in the darkness, suddenly touched hers; and a voice close by, speaking out of the storm and wind, said, "Don't be afraid. Kelpie knows me. I am Guy Chichester!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

LITTLE FLORENCE.

WHAT do we do in great crises of our life?

How many of us can answer that question? Our friends know, perhaps: as for us, we are stricken dumb with a great silence.

Who is this breathing, living, moving being? Is it I? Do I feel all this? Is the clock striking? Am I awake? Is the world just as it was before this morning? By and by we shall feel glad, or sorry perhaps; now we look on with blank eyes in which there is a little wonder, perhaps terror; presently we shall wake up, we think, and find it all a dream.

Dym never knew what she felt when that unlooked-for apparition crossed the threshold and drew her on with it. One faint cry she had uttered, half in recognition and half in terror, as that groping touch met hers in the darkness, but now she seemed stricken dumb.

Her limbs shook under her, and she leaned against the wall to support herself as the strange bearded figure quietly closed the door and then stooped down to caress the dog that was shivering and whining about his feet. She could not have spoken, only when it turned and held out its hands to her in silence, the girl sprang forward and fastened on them, and her head was bowed lower and lower till it touched the rough coat-sleeve.

He let her stand so for a minute, as though speech was difficult even to him.

"Poor child, I never meant to frighten you in this way; it was Kelpie's fault; but it was brave of you to open the door."

"If I had only known—Oh, Mr. Chichester!" Dym's voice had a quiver of ecstasy in it now.

"Somebody besides Kelpie has not forgotten me, I see," laying his hand on her hair. "Hush, my child! do not tremble so: it is no wraith, but a real flesh-and-blood Guy Chichester."

"Yes, I know—safe home. I said it—I felt it, thank God."

"Amen," returned Guy Chichester, devoutly; but the word was followed by a heavy sigh.

That sigh recalled Dym to herself.

The coming home might be joy to them—a bringing back from the dead—but what must it be to him? and then his mother.

"Come," she whispered, her soft cold fingers closing round his hand and drawing him with gentle force; "we must not stand here; it would kill her if she heard your voice—with joy, I mean. They all thought you were dead—all but I—I never believed it. Come." And she led him to the dark library. Guy offered no resistance; he stood by silently, while Dym with shaking hands kindled the lamp she had always kept trimmed for his coming, and then set light to the piled-up logs. She did not rise from her knees till the dry wood spluttered and crackled into a blaze; even by the dim flare of the hall lamp she had seen he was dripping with wet from head to foot.

She stole a look at him now as she rose to her feet. He was no wraith, he had told her, and yet as he stood in his old position propping his broad shoulders against the mantelpiece it seemed to her that but for his voice she would hardly have recognized him. Was this their Sintram—the Guy Chichester they had missed for so many hopeless years—this tall haggard figure in sailor's dress? The brown bearded face looked thin and sallow and unkempt; there was a sunken weariness about his eyes, and his hair and beard were quite gray; he looked ten—twenty years older.

He turned, and saw her watching him with her eyes full of tears.

"You don't know me, eh?" he said, with something of his old abruptness, only it was sharpened by pain. And as she came closer and put her hand timidly on his arm, as though she wanted the assurance of touch that this was really he, his closed over it quickly, almost eagerly. "Let me hold it a moment; I want to feel the touch of a woman's hand again. Good God! to think I have come to this! so they thought I was dead?"

"Humphrey said so, and Mr. Fortescue, and I think your mother feared it at last. Mrs. Delaire put on mourning; they were all angry with me because I would not believe it."

"Humph," somewhat grimly; "I feel like a ghost revisiting my old haunts." And then, as though the innocent pressure of the soft fingers soothed him, he said, half smiling, "Then you did not believe it, eh?"

"I could not," the tears brimming over her pale cheeks now. "I never had a doubt till this evening, when Humphrey fretted me. I knew—I was sure—you would come back to your child."

"Ah, heavens, my child!" The hollow eyes gathered a little light now, the hard muscles of the face relaxed. She had touched the right chord.

"She is such a darling, you will love her so," went on Dym, hurriedly; "she has prayed every night for you ever since she could lisp your name."

"My little Florence," shading his eyes with his hand and speaking huskily now: "tell me more about them, Miss Elliott—my mother?"

"She is somewhat ailing," returned Dym, evasively; but there was no eluding those stern sad eyes.

"I have a mother still? you are not trying to break any bad news to me? Tut! how you frightened me! I saw a light in her window just now—she is ill, then?"

"Very ill; I think the fear you were dead has broken her heart. She has been very weak, and they say she has no wish to rally; she will be better now, only——"

"Only what?"

"She is blind."

"Again! good God!"

"You must not mind: it will be easier to bear now; it has all been so wretched. Hark! what is that?" as a crashing noise was heard outside. Mr. Chichester listened.

"One of the elms, I expect, has fallen into the carriage-sweep. Ugh, what a night it is! all the storm-fiends are abroad, I think."

"And you came home in spite of the storm?"

"Yes, I had got the home-sickness too strong to wait till the morning. A little extra buffeting would do me no harm, I thought; and then I saw the light in her window, and heard Kelpie bark. I knew when the door opened that I should see my little friend on the threshold."

"Kelpie found you—not I—good brave Kelpie."

"I was stealing away like a thief, when the rascal jumped on me; so I have friends still. Ah, well, I never dreamt of this—that I should be glad to come home even without her!"

"Are you glad, Mr. Chichester?"

"Yes, child, yes; I never thought to be thankful when He gave me back my life; but I am thankful now."

"Why?" she asked, speaking more to herself than to him.

"Why? have I not a child? I have been a poor father, perhaps, but it was the thought of her that kept the life in me, when one after another succumbed. I have looked death in the face more than once, but she has brought me back."

Dym shuddered; he was in the boat's crew after all; she had found the clue to his gray hair and hollow cheeks; he was gaunt through famine, worn by sickness, perhaps; the proud strength within him had given way under such cruel hardships.

"Why do you not take me to my child?" he continued, reproachfully; but Dym shook her head as she touched his wet sleeve meaningly.

"You must not go to her like this; you are wet through, Mr. Chichester. I will wake Stewart, and he shall bring you some dry clothes, and some wine."

"I would rather have some food," he returned, shivering, and holding his hands over the blaze; "I have learned to bear hunger tolerably well," with a bitter smile, "but my endurance will not hold out much longer. Do you know I worked my way to Liverpool, and I had only money to pay my railway fare? I have not broken my fast since yesterday."

Dym uttered an exclamation of horror: he was starving, and she had never offered him food. In what a pitiable plight had the master of Ingleside returned!

"Wait a moment," she gasped; she ran down the dark corridor that led to the servants' quarters. Stewart slept in a little room opening out of the butler's pantry. The lad stirred in his sleep as Dym shaded her lamp and called to him.

"It ain't time to get up, Miles: it is all that old lying cock," he muttered, drowsily. Dym had almost to shake him.

"Your master has come home—hush, don't wake the others; you must get up directly. I want wine, and food, and clothes for him; he is wet through and almost starving."

Stewart was wide awake after this; he found Miss Elliott loading a tray with food from the larder, and took it from her without a word; his ruddy face was quite gaping and pale, as the gaunt, gray-haired figure in the ragged sailor's dress came eagerly forward.

"Is you the master? I shouldn't have known him. We thought you was dead, sir," burst out poor Stewart, looking round-eyed and aghast. Guy held out his hand to him with one of his sad smiles.

"Miss Elliott took me for a ghost just now. Don't be afraid, my good fellow: you don't know how sorrow and hunger change a man; when I have had something to eat and drink I may look more like myself."

Dym waited on him noiselessly. Once, as she was serving him with something, he took the little hand and carried it to his lips.

"If you knew what it is to me to have a woman's hand about me again," he said, with some emotion. "I think your hair would rise, Miss Elliott, if you knew what I had been through." And for a long time after that he did not speak again.

Stewart came back by and by with an armful of his master's clothes.

"I did it as quietly as I could," he whispered, "but Dorothy heard me and came to the door. I think the mistress is awake."

"I must go to her," returned Dym, rising. "I was afraid of this. Wait with your master, Stewart."

Mrs. Chichester was sitting up in bed. She looked flushed and excited: her white hair had escaped from her cap, and lay in silvery lengths on her shoulder. Dorothy was smoothing it.

"Stewart has wakened my mistress," said Dorothy, quickly. Dym tried to silence her with a look.

"What can Stewart be doing up here at this time of night, my dear? He was in Guy's room: I heard him. Dorothy would have it I was dreaming, till she went herself to look." Dym stole an agitated glance at Dorothy, but the waiting-woman's iron face was immovable as usual.

"I thought maybe he was walking in his sleep, only he had

got some clothes over his arm. You haven't been to bed yourself, Miss Elliott, though it is nigh on an hour since you left us. Folks seem restless to-night," finished Dorothy, who had been disturbed from her own sleep, and was slightly impracticable.

"Is anything the matter? Why have you not been to bed, my dear?" asked Mrs. Chichester, anxiously. Dym was nearly at her wit's end. If Dr. Grey, or even Humphrey, were here, to tell her what to do; she had heard that these sudden surprises were dangerous; and yet Stewart, and the clothes, and her own wakefulness—how was she to account for all that?

In desperation, she went dangerously near the truth: Kelpie was restless; a poor man had taken refuge in their porch from the storm, and the dog had heard him; he was wet through and sadly in want of food, and she had wakened Stewart.

"A fine thing for Stewart to take his master's clothes," put in Dorothy, with a toss of her head; "poor man! most likely a tramp, or something worse. You oughtn't to have opened the door, Miss Elliott; it is not safe: he may be one of a gang. And the master's clothes, too."

"Dollie, what ever makes you so cross to-night? you are making Mrs. Chichester quite nervous with your fancies. He is only a poor homeless wanderer, and quite harmless," finished Dym, with a sudden choke.

"He will come back, my girl." Oh, Will, dear Will, those brave words had come true.

"Maybe the mistress would be easier if I go down and have a look at him myself," returned Dorothy. Dym's agitation had not escaped her. Dorothy watched over her mistress's interest with a grim mastiff-like fidelity. Dym, in spite of her position at Ingleside, had often hard work to combat Dorothy's prejudices.

Dym gave herself up for lost as soon as Dorothy left the room, and then a sudden inspiration came to her.

"You don't think me wrong, do you, dear?" she said, as she sat gently stroking the wrinkled hand, and trying to control the trembling of her voice. "Dorothy is very good, but she is hard sometimes; you would not have had me leave the poor man out in this dreadful storm."

"You might have sent him on to the lodge," replied Mrs. Chichester, doubtfully.

"You would not have said so if you had seen him. Mr. Chichester would have told me I was right: he never turned any one away."

A sort of spasm crossed the poor blind face; it was months since they had mentioned her son's name in her hearing.

"Oh, my boy! my boy! if I only knew where they had laid him!" she groaned; and then Dym knew that the hope had faded out of the mother's heart, and that she believed her son was dead.

If she should do harm instead of good! Dym was trembling so now that she could hardly speak.

"I want you to listen to me, dear. I have just heard such a strange story: it made me think of him and Will too. You will try to listen to me."

"I will try; but why did you mention his name? Oh, Guy! Guy!"

"This poor man, the one who is down-stairs," went on Dym, bravely, "left his home and all that was dear to him, because a great trouble had almost driven him mad, and he went away and wandered in foreign countries, and over great seas, just as your son has done."

"As Guy did; just as my boy did." And Mrs. Chichester rocked herself to and fro.

"He was so buffeted and tossed about that he hardly cared what became of him; he was shipwrecked, he suffered hunger and thirst, he saw his mates dying round him, and nothing kept his wretched life in him but the thought of his child."

"His child!" Mrs. Chichester's attention was arrested; she left off rocking herself, to listen.

"He had only this dear little child to love him, except his mother, and he hardly knew whether he should find her alive —you are not listening to me, dear," cried Dym, in a sort of agony, as her watchful ears caught the sound of approaching footsteps: they were advancing up the corridor, they came nearer and nearer; was Dorothy mad, that she was bringing him to the very door?

"Not yet! oh, not yet!" she called out half beside herself, and flinging her arms round the poor invalid; but the mother's ears were not to be cheated.

"You are hiding something from me. Hark! what is that?" she exclaimed, pushing Dym away with weak arms

that suddenly became rigid. "I tell you those are my boy's footsteps! It is Guy, he is not dead—my boy, my boy Guy!" But the shock was too great: the cry of joy died into a hoarse shriek, and as Guy sprang to her side she fainted away.

"Is she dead? Have I killed my mother?" Dym never forgot the white face of anguish with which Guy Chichester asked the question. Dym shook her head as she applied the necessary remedies.

"Why did you not leave her to me? We were wrong all of us," she whispered presently. "I think you had better go away now, Mr. Chichester: it will be safer, much safer!"

"Don't send me away," he implored; "look here, Miss Elliott, she knows me." And the tears positively stood in Guy Chichester's eyes as the weak nerveless fingers closed round his hand. "You know me, mother, don't you?" he continued; "you know Guy has come back, never to leave you again?"

Yes, she knows him now, as with her feeble strength she creeps closer to him and lays her poor blind face on his breast, "her son that was dead and is alive again." They need not fear for her: such happiness seldom kills. Dym stands and watches them for a moment, and then steals softly from the room, beseeching Dorothy to follow her.

"What was that you said, Guy? Tell it me again, my boy."

"I promised I would never leave you. You have a great deal to forgive, mother darling."

"No, you must never leave me again, my dear," passing her thin hand caressingly over the rough bearded face; "never again, my son. I think if you had stayed away a little longer, only a very little longer, Guy, my heart would have broken."

Flossie had such a queer dream that night.

She was fast asleep, oh, quite fast asleep, she was sure, when a great bright round star as big as a moon went dancing round her bed and flared up in her eyes, and just as she called to auntie to take it away, some one cried out, quite loud, "Give me the light; I must see her, little Florence! little Florence!" and a tall man stooped over her and brushed her cheek with a long soft beard.

Flossie was quite sure, too, that after this auntie cuddled her off to sleep; but auntie was of another opinion, for as the child

opened her dreamy eyes, Guy fell on his knees and called out her name with a sobbing spasm in his throat.

When Flossie fell asleep again it was in her father's arms: the golden head pillowed itself quite unconsciously on the rough coat, the dimpled arm flung itself with a child's carelessness across the broad heaving breast, and so through the long dark dawn, and far into the stormy March morning, Guy Chichester kept watch and ward beside his child.

Flossie was slow in waking the next morning. A pleasant puzzle of thoughts came into her head; a cock was crowing somewhere; there was a great patter of rain-drops against the windows; Flossie opened her eyes and began to count them. "One—two—three—four; what a many! I shall never do it; they are all having a game of play, and running after each other. Oh, dear! oh, dear!" yawned Flossie.

"That's right; open those pretty eyes, my darling. Gray eyes! just like hers—just like hers."

Flossie was wide awake now, so why did she rub her eyes again and again? She was not dreaming, not a bit of it. There was the cock crowing, and there were the rain-drops, and, close beside her, there was the same tall man she dreamt about last night.

Flossie was not a bit frightened, so she lay and looked at him—such an ugly man, with a great beard that hid his mouth, and rough gray hair, and great sad eyes that seemed familiar to her, perhaps—though he was so ugly; and then Flossie rubbed her eyes again.

"My little Florence, my own darling, do you know me?"

Florence nodded her head gravely, and pursed up her lips; evidently she was not prepossessed.

"Who am I? Speak, my pet."

"I suppose you are papa," shrugging her shoulders, and then speaking confidently,—"yes, I know you are papa, though you are not a bit like your picture; and I don't believe"—patting her pillow rather crossly—"that I shall love you a bit."

"Oh, Flo! Flo! how can you be so naughty?"

"Leave her to me, please, Miss Elliott," whispered Guy, but his brown cheek reddened a little; "so young a child is surely to be won. Answer me, sweet-eyes, why do you think you will not love me?"

This puzzled Florence.

"If you are papa, you are not a good papa to stop away so long. Auntie and I have been quite tired of saying, 'God bless dear papa, forever and ever, Amen!' for, oh, such a long time!"

"Have you really prayed for me, my precious pet? Has Florence wanted her father?"

"Not much—at least auntie did. She used to cry nearly every day she talked about you. Do you love auntie, papa?"

"Very much," returned Guy, gravely; but it must be owned that he hardly understood the question in the sudden thrill of ecstasy at hearing himself addressed for the first time by that title: it cost him an effort not to snatch the little creature to his breast and devour her with kisses, only he dreaded to alarm her.

Florence smiled, well pleased at his answer. She sidled up a little closer, stealing a small warm hand into Guy's shaking one.

"I think I shall like you, after all. Auntie does; and I love auntie best of all in the world."

"Oh, no; not best, Florence; you must surely keep the best for poor papa."

"Are you poor, papa? Aren't you happy? Do you want auntie and me to love you so very much, then?"

"I want you to love me, my little daughter—my heart's treasure—my only one." And, forgetful of his resolution, Guy held the fair little face between his hands and covered it with kisses; and then, as the child drew back startled at his vehemence, he took his seat quietly beside her, and, in an agitated voice, told her, in the language best suited to her childish capacity, that he had been a long way—thousands and thousands of miles; that he had once been nearly drowned in the great dreadful sea; that he had been cold, and hungry, and thirsty; that he had loved her, and thought of his little daughter day and night, and had prayed to God to send him safe home to her. "And now I have come you must try to love me, Honor's dear baby, whom she left as her dying legacy; you will love me for poor mamma's sake, won't you, Florence?"

"She is—isn't poor mamma," returned the child, indignantly; "mamma is a beautiful angel; auntie told me so.

Were you very cold and hungry, papa? Are you warm now? Never mind, auntie and I will take such care of you."

"And you will love me, my pet?"

"Oh, yes; I don't mind your being ugly now, though your beard does hurt so. Put your head down on the pillow; I can reach you so; there, that is comfortable. One kiss for mamma—auntie told me to do it; and one for auntie; and three from little Florence. And why do you cry, papa? I shall be a great girl soon, and then I shall be quite as good as mamma, you know."

Dym left the father and child together, and, muffling herself up in her waterproof, and only taking the precaution to draw the hood over her bright hair, ran down the terrace and across the garden, and out of the little side-gate leading to the home-farm.

The first burst of mother's rapture, the child's first recognition, was over, and Dym's next thought was for Humphrey; Humphrey must know, and no one but she must tell him.

Running down the wet field-paths, battling bravely with the wind and rain, and now and then stopping to take breath, Dym sped light of foot and light of heart till, turning the corner of the farm-buildings, she almost fell into the arms of Humphrey himself.

"What's to do now?—why, what in the name of wonder brings you down to the farm, Dym?" And Humphrey eyed the little hooded and cloaked figure with growing perplexity and uneasiness. "Madam isn't worse, is she?"

"She is better," returned Dym, breathlessly, tossing back her hood, and displaying a very rosy and happy face; "she is sleeping as sweetly as a child, and as she has not slept for months; and Dorothy is sitting beside her, crying her eyes out."

"Dorothy crying! You are in a crazy mood this morning, Dym. What ever brings you down to the Five-acre on such a morning?"

"There is nothing the matter with the morning; I never thought rain so beautiful before. I declare, I hardly felt it; and I wanted so to speak to you, Humphrey."

"I won't hear a word you have to say here," returned Humphrey, decisively; "if you are clean daft, Dym, I must

take care of you. Come under the caves of the great barn; none of the men are about; and now tell me this wonderful piece of news."

"How do you know I have any to tell?" returned Dym, with an attempt at her old pertness; "it is not the first time I have come over to the farm to talk to you."

"But it is the first time you have brought that sort of face with you," returned Humphrey, shrewdly; and indeed Dym's dark eyes were bright with heart-sunshine. "Shall I guess, Dym, or will you have the telling yourself?"

"You couldn't guess, Humphrey, if you were to try ever so. Stoop your head; I want to whisper; it is too good to say out loud. Who do you think is at Ingleside, Humphrey? Oh, Humphrey, who do you think came home last night?"

Dym's whisper broke into a falter, but Humphrey, generally so slow of comprehension, heard it perfectly. He started, and then his eyes flashed.

"Not the squire! Oh, Dym, you can never mean that!" And a strange shiver of repressed feeling ran through Humphrey Nethecote's frame.

"His very own self, but, oh, such a wreck, Humphrey, gray-haired and thin, and years older. Will you rebuke me for my faith now, because I told his mother and child that he would surely come home again?"

"No, no: you were right, and I was wrong, and thank God for it! The squire has come home, you say; nay, I am a trifle dizzy, Dym: tell it me over again. Why, we thought he was dead—Madam and all of us."

"Kelpie and I knew better: it was Kelpie who knew him first, and insisted on my unbarring the door. Come, Humphrey, you must not look pale over it; you are more startled because you lost all hope, you see."

"Ay, ay, when I see him I shall understand it better. Come away, Dym; why are we waiting? The squire will expect a welcome, of course."

Dym nodded assent, but she looked up anxiously into Humphrey's face as they threaded the wet field-paths again. Humphrey's face was quite blanched with his great surprise, and now and then he bit his lip nervously.

"The squire's come home, and I thought he was lying fathoms deep," she heard him mutter to himself; and then, as

though the real truth were suddenly dawning on him, he quickened his steps into a hasty stride.

"Gently, gently, Humphrey!" but for once he did not hear her. Dym's own footsteps became a run, and even then she only retained her place at his side with difficulty; she followed him panting as Humphrey pushed open the conservatory door and advanced to the library; but there the old instinct made them both pause, and Dym timidly knocked.

"Who is there?—come in. What, Humphrey!" Guy put down his child from his knee and rose hastily, and the two men grasped hands in silence.

"Eh, squire! but we have been heart-sick for the loss of you, and the good God has given you back to us." And Humphrey turned aside for a moment, and his face worked with emotion.

"I haven't deserved it, Humphrey," returned Guy, in a broken voice, "any more than I deserve this welcome. I never thought that anything could be so sweet to me again. Look here, dear old friend, my more than brother!" and, throwing his arm over Humphrey's broad shoulder, he drew him to where the child sat watching them with solemn gray eyes of puzzled wonder.

"She is growing like Honor's self. I always said she would, squire; she will be the light of your eyes and the sunshine of your home, before many years are over."

"She has Honor's eyes and broad thoughtful brow; but she will never have her mother's beauty, and her hair is several shades lighter," added Guy, regretfully.

"Mamma is very pretty, but I think auntie is prettier," interrupted Florence. "Why do you look sad, papa? you are not hungry or cold now, you know."

"No, not now, my darling," he replied, fondly, snatching her again to his breast; "at least I can bear to endure my life now this one blessing is spared to me. I never thought to say that, Humphrey, till I knew how dreadful the shadow of the valley of death could be."

"Ay, we must all bide till our time comes," returned Humphrey, laconically; but as Florence nestled caressingly on her father's shoulder, the child's golden hair mingled with the squire's gray beard, Dym saw him hastily turn away and brush his hand across his eyes.

CHAPTER XXXII.

AT BAY.

THE news of the squire's return spread like wildfire through the little valley of Birstwith, and, before many hours were over, Ingleside was besieged by friends and acquaintances of all degrees.

The vicar and his wife were the first arrivals. Mr. Fortescue, as he entered the room and heard Guy's cheery, "Well, Lat, how has it fared with you, old fellow?" was so overpowered with emotion that he could only wring his cousin's hand without saying a word; while Katherine, silent and subdued for once in her life, kissed him affectionately, and said, "God bless you, Guy!" and then indulged in a thorough womanly bit of crying.

"Who would have believed Kate had so much feeling in her?" Mr. Chichester observed afterwards, but his own eyes glistened as he said it. Through that day's ordeal the squire bore himself bravely, but Dym noticed his face grew paler and graver, and his lips were often compressed as though in pain, as he listened to his friends' kindly congratulations and warm expressions of joy.

Towards evening the terrace before the house was literally crowded with hosts of the farm-laborers, anxious to catch a glimpse of the "Maister, God bless him!"—gray-haired patriarchs of the valley, who had known him as a boy, some of the old almshouse men, with a sprinkling of women and boys, and at the very edge of the group Grace Dunster in her gray duffle cloak, peering anxiously over Deb's shoulder. Guy singled her out at once with a greeting that made the little dressmaker crimson with pleasure; in spite of his fatigue and depression, he had a word and a hand-shake for every one of them; as he left them, a ringing cheer startled the rooks into frightened cawing. "Three times three—that's right, my men; now you must drink the squire's health, one and all of you; you all know where the squire keeps his home-brewed." And by this

judicious hint Humphrey Nethecote rapidly cleared the terrace and grounds for the night. Dym could hear the cheers dying off slowly in the distance. Before long the valley was ablaze with a red lurid light: a huge bonfire was burning on the common. Humphrey called the squire to look at it.

"Poor lads! it is their way of killing the fatted calf. I suppose we must give them a dinner or a supper; you must manage it, Humphrey." And then he sat down by his mother with a sigh, and drew Florence to his knee, and for the rest of the evening he scarcely spoke, except in answer to their questions.

"Ah, but the squire's rarely changed," was Humphrey's parting observation that night; "he'll never be the man he was again." And before many days were over Dym coincided in Humphrey's opinion.

It was true that when the first excitement of coming home had a little subsided Guy became strangely taciturn and silent; he was very reticent on the subject of his wanderings, and evaded as far as possible all inquiries as to his escape from the burning vessel.

"Why should I speak of what causes me such acute suffering only in the retrospect?—you would not sleep to-night, mother, neither should I, if I were to recapitulate all the horrors of that ghastly scene." And Guy's shudder was sufficiently expressive.

"Let the dead past bury its dead," he said, on another occasion, when Mr. Fortescue was questioning him; "don't let us rake up bygones, Lat: it was all a miserable failure from beginning to end—India or Australia, what did it matter? I took my trouble with me. I never got rid of it for a minute—and now."

"Well, Guy?"

"I have brought it back: that is all." And the dark moody look came across Guy Chichester's face as he put down his child from his knee and resumed his old restless walk across the room. But, except when they questioned him about these dreary three years, he was ordinarily very gentle and quiet. It was beautiful to watch him with his mother and child. He would rouse himself from his melancholy brooding to sit by his mother's side and talk to her by the hour together, but it was evident that his one thought was Florence.

He was ill at ease if the child were out of his sight even for an hour; from morning to night he was devising little plans for her amusement. Florence's "new papa," as she called him, became her favorite playfellow. Guy's old spark of humor woke up when he told stories to his child. Often Humphrey would meet them on the farm, walking hand in hand, Guy's shoulders a little stooping, his head bent, Florence dancing beside him with her fair hair streaming in the wind.

Guy bought a little cream-colored pony and trained it himself; he taught Florence to ride, to her great delight. The Black Prophet was exercised regularly now. Dym, as she watched them from the terrace, was strangely reminded of the old days at Lansdowne House, when Edith and Cousin Guy used to ride out together.

Edith was growing up now, and was wintering at Mentone with her mother, who had become a confirmed invalid; but Beatrix Delaire had written that she might be expected at Ingleside in the course of a week or two.

Guy showed her letter to Dym.

"I hope you have forgotten your old antagonism," he said, with one of his old shrewd looks. "Poor Trichy! she has had her share of trouble with the rest of us."

"I think Mrs. Delaire has greatly improved since her residence abroad," returned Dym, magnanimously; "she is lovelier than ever, and has grown strangely gentle, even to me," laughing a little nervously.

"I am glad to hear it; I shall think better of her," was Guy's answer, and the subject dropped; but all that day and the next Dym took herself to task because the old uneasy feeling had returned at the thought that Mrs. Delaire was coming to Ingleside.

"It is so nice and quiet now, and when she comes she will monopolize him, and he will not find time to say a word to me," whispered jealousy. "He will always find time to remember his friends," added Dym's better monitor.

Dym was always taking herself to task now. Something unaccountable and wholly mysterious was troubling her sweet nature sorely. She was strangely happy and yet ill at ease, and never so ill at ease as in Guy Chichester's presence.

Dym told herself sometimes that she was growing jealous even of Florence. What if the father and child should be-

come all in all to each other, and she were robbed of her darling? Dym cried shame on herself for this unworthy feeling; but she need not have feared—Florence was true to her old favorite, and often refused to accompany her father for a walk or drive unless auntie were of the party.

"You see Florence has not learned to do without me yet," Dym would say, a little sadly and apologetically, when Mr. Chichester insisted on her accompanying them: "she will be wiser soon."

"When Florence learns to forget her old friends, she will be no daughter of mine," returned Guy, with one of his winning smiles. "Why will you consider yourself *de trop*, Miss Elliott? Do you think that no one besides Florence is pleased to have you?"

It was evident Guy Chichester had not forgotten his old favorite. There was a grave, almost a brotherly tenderness in his manner to her, that ought to have won her from her reserve now and then. He would bear himself towards her as though he felt himself her debtor. It was true the girl had endeared herself to him in no small degree by the filial care and love she had lavished on his mother.

"But for you, she would not be alive to welcome me now, and the sin of having broken my mother's heart would have lain heavily at my door. You have saved me from this last bitterness, Miss Elliott; you have loved and guarded my motherless child for me; and yet you say I owe you no debt of gratitude."

"It was canceled long ago, Mr. Chichester. I implore—I beg you not to say such things. Who was it who first befriended the lonely girl, and made her welcome in your own home? You have been my benefactor and friend ever since I first saw you," continued Dym, in a voice of emotion, and then breaking down altogether.

"Have it your own way," he responded, with a sad smile, holding out his hand; "you may close my lips, but you cannot prevent my feeling grateful to you with all my heart. Put me to the proof, Miss Elliott; see if there be anything that I would not do for your happiness if it were in my power." And there was a look in Guy Chichester's dark eyes as he said this that set the seal to his words.

Such speeches as these filled Dym's heart with a tumultuous

happiness that was akin to pain. She would think over them with a beating heart, as she sat working silently by Mrs. Chichester's side.

She had grown very silent of late, they told her. Dym used to smile at the accusation, but all the time she knew it was true. When Mr. Chichester was in the room she felt strangely tongue-tied—a new sort of shyness oppressed her; she had an odd trick of flushing up when he looked at or spoke to her. Dym could not understand what ailed her; she had lost all her old fearless ways, and yet she only told herself that it was because this long absence had made her friend strange to her.

"I have something against you, Miss Elliott," Guy said to her one day, when they were alone together in the drawing-room: it was the evening that Mrs. Delaire was expected, and the carriage had been sent down to the station. Dym, who had made her toilette early, was kneeling on the rug in the fire-light, caressing Kelpie, when Mr. Chichester came in.

Dym rose with a sudden blush, and seated herself in silence.

"Against me, Mr. Chichester!"

"Ay," he returned, with a penetrating glance, as he took his old attitude against the mantelpiece. "I have long wished to ask you something. I want to know what has become of my little friend?"

"I don't understand you!" stammered Dym; but she grew rosy notwithstanding.

"I saw her last on the threshold of the door one wild March morning, when Kelpie scented his master. She was sufficiently benevolent to throw the door wide open for him to enter, but"—with a singular emphasis—"I have never seen her since."

Dym colored high; she was beginning to grasp his meaning.

"What has become of her, Miss Elliott, I should like to know? She had her faults, but want of affection and of candor was not among them. Do you know I miss my little friend every day?"

"She is here!" in a voice barely above a whisper.

Mr. Chichester smiled.

"I don't think so. Miss Elliott, have you grown to be afraid of me?"

"Not very." Dym was crimson now.

"A little, then!"

"I don't know; anyhow, I cannot help it, Mr. Chichester." He shook his head indulgently.

"Out of sight is out of mind. Fie! Miss Elliott, I would not have believed it of you."

"Oh, no; it is not that," she exclaimed, eagerly, roused at last into defending herself, but stammering still; "I have not forgotten you, Mr. Chichester—how could I? only it is all so strange, and you are altered, and——"

"I am not altered to you"—somewhat pointedly—"and as for the outward man——" he sighed, and then went on in the same gentle tone: "Child, I don't like to see you shy and shrinking from me; somehow, it hurts me. Though my hair is gray, and my heart wellnigh broken, I have still some old affections for my friends; and I ever held you as one of them."

"Oh, Mr. Chichester!" But Dym had no time to say any more; for at that moment the carriage-wheels sounded in the entry, and Mr. Chichester hastened out to welcome his cousin.

Dym was not present at their meeting; but she noticed that Beatrix looked pale and agitated when she came into the room a few minutes later, leaning on her cousin's arm. She greeted Dym with so much kindness that Guy had reason to conclude the old antagonism was dead and buried; and even Dym, who always in her secret heart accused Beatrix of artifice in her simplest words and actions, was not proof against the gentleness that disarmed her.

No one could believe Beatrix was acting a part who saw her that evening. Generally cold and undemonstrative, she was affectionate in her demeanor to her aunt, lavish of caresses to little Florence, while her joy at seeing her cousin again was evidently deep and earnest.

If Beatrix had set herself to charm them all, she could not have succeeded better. Guy, who was generally silent and restless after Florence had gone to bed, now joined the fireside group, and seemed interested in the description of a trip to the Pyrenees that Beatrix was giving her aunt, and now and then he could not help owning to himself that Miss Elliott was right in declaring that his cousin was lovelier than ever.

Beatrix's face and form had always seemed to his fastidious taste wellnigh faultless, though it had been somewhat marred by a repellent haughtiness and a cold searching look in the eyes;

this was exchanged now for a softened bearing, and the transparent complexion was now perfectly dazzling in contrast to her deep mourning-dress.

"I believe my poor Undine has found her soul, after all," was Guy's secret comment: "perhaps, after all, she liked Frank more than we thought." And with his old kindliness Guy Chichester set himself to make his cousin's visit pleasant to her.

It was the old mistaken kindness, but it failed to achieve its object.

For some days, more than a week indeed, everything went on smoothly at Ingleside. Beatrix's white brow wore a peaceful unruffled look that had long been a stranger to it; she made herself quite at home in Mrs. Chichester's boudoir and in the squire's study, she helped her cousin with his accounts, rode out with him and Florence, and already village gossip reported that the beautiful widow would eventually take up her residence at Ingleside. "Ay, she is a rare beauty, but she is not so real bonnie as t'ither were," as one of the old women at the almshouses was heard to say; "she hasn't a glint of sunshine in her face; there's no one like 'the good lady.'"

Guy smiled scornfully when these reports reached him.

"Slanderous fools!" he muttered. "Do they think I would replace Honor? Poor Trichy! I hope this will not reach her ears: it would annoy her dreadfully."

But it was not village gossip that brought the first cloud on Beatrix Delaire's face: a trifle, a word, had revived the old soreness. One day Dym felt there was an imperceptible change in Beatrix's manner, and taxed all her efforts to discover the cause, but in vain.

"I have not slighted her in any way," thought Dym: "it must be my fancy." But the next day it was there, and the next also.

Could it be that Beatrix resented Dym's position at Ingleside, that she was jealous of Florence's devotion, of her aunt's warm love for her adopted daughter, that Guy's friendship was displeasing to her? "She never liked me to have much to do with him," thought poor Dym.

Dym was half right and half wrong in her surmise as to Mrs. Delaire's changed manner. Beatrix had made up her mind to accept Dym as a necessary evil, and to tolerate her position at Ingleside with as good a grace as possible—come

what might, she would not quarrel with her. Guy had his whims, and this was one of them, and she did not choose to incense him against her.

Beatrix was determined to be perfectly good-humored and to patronize Miss Elliott. She personally disliked her—Beatrix always disliked those she had injured—but her repugnance had to be conquered or hidden.

"It is love me, love my dog," she thought, smiling bitterly at her cousin's autocratic ways. "It is a pity he is so foolishly Quixotic. I wonder if he will ever care for a woman after Honor?" And Beatrix sighed as she thought of the strong tenacity of Guy Chichester's affection. For a time Beatrix found her rôle perfectly easy, and then all at once her manner changed.

And why?

Because the widow's shrewd cold eyes had read Dym's innocent secret—the secret unguessed even by herself—and she had determined that at all hazards Dym must be removed from Ingleside.

"If he finds it out, as he surely will, he will only pity her, and—well, one never knows to what length men like Guy can go; he must never know it, never. If I ventured to warn her in a friendly way—" And Beatrix rose from her low seat, and began pacing the room with troubled steps.

"I think I shall venture it. She will fly into a passion in her old way, and call me her enemy. Are we enemies, I wonder? What made me dislike this girl from the first? If I were superstitious, I should say she crossed my path in an evil day. Honor Nethecote was not specially dear to me, but one was obliged to respect her in spite of one's hatred; but Miss Elliott——" Here Beatrix's uneasy cogitations were interrupted by the entrance of Miss Elliott herself.

Dym came into the room smiling. "Mr. Chichester wants to know if you will ride with him. Florence and he are going over to Ripley; it is such a beautiful day, and—Are you not well, Mrs. Delaire?" Dym had certainly some reason in asking the question. Beatrix looked pale and worn; at such times her face would look almost old.

"Yes—no—I am not very well this morning. Tell my cousin, please, Miss Elliott, that I will not ride; give him my love; say I have a fit of the vapors—anything you like."

"If you are dull, shall I come and sit with you?" asked Dym, timidly. Somehow the young figure in its deep mourning always evoked her sympathy; instinctively she felt that Beatrix Delaire was unhappy, and the generous girl longed to comfort her.

"Yes, if you like," answered Beatrix, indifferently, but under her cold demeanor her heart was throbbing loudly. Was this her opportunity? Should she speak to her now? She must dissemble, and pretend kindness, she thought to herself. In spite of her habitual insincerity, Beatrix felt this thing was not easy to be done.

Dym found her sitting by the fire in deep thought, with her head resting on her hand. As Dym took the seat beside her, she suddenly shivered and moved slightly.

"I am sorry to see you so ill, Mrs. Delaire."

Beatrix smiled bitterly. "I am never ill; have you ever heard me complain, Miss Elliott?"

"You are unhappy, then?" in Dym's softest tones.

"Well, perhaps you are right; something has occurred to trouble me: that is all."

"I am sorry—" began Dym; but Beatrix interrupted her almost fiercely.

"I suppose you would be surprised if I told you that you yourself were the cause of my trouble, Miss Elliott."

"Who? I—I hope—that is, I trust I have done nothing to offend you?" stammered Dym.

There was a strange earnestness and abruptness in Beatrix's manner that startled her, but the next moment it had wholly changed.

"Offended me, my dear Miss Elliott? No, you have only made me think," in a soft, melancholy voice. "I cannot help being very sorry for you: that is all."

"Sorry for me!" Dym's cheeks were flaming now.

"Yes; you are so singularly placed, and my aunt is so injudicious—so helpless, I mean. If I were not afraid of making you angry, I think I should try and warn you of something; but I dare not provoke the hasty temper I remember so well, Miss Elliott."

Dym lifted her hot face bravely.

"I hope I have learned to control it now. You frighten me, Mrs. Delaire. What have I done to pain you?"

"Nothing," replied Beatrix, laying her hand lightly on hers for a moment. Somehow Dym quite shuddered away from the cool polished touch. "Why will you persist in thinking that you have offended me, if I am only speaking as your friend?"

"My friend!" Dym could not suppress that exclamation. A flush crossed Mrs. Delaire's face as she heard it.

"You distrust me still," she said, drawing herself up proudly; "you have never forgotten the old grudge when we were girls together, Miss Elliott. If you will not believe I mean it for your good, at least you know me to be interested in my cousin's welfare?"

"Why do you bring in Mr. Chichester's name?" asked Dym, in a bewildered voice.

"Because what I have to say concerns him closely, Miss Elliott. You will hate me outright, I know, but I must speak. I must warn you that your continued residence under my cousin's roof is perilous to your peace of mind. Don't misunderstand me," she continued, eagerly; "no one has told me—I have found it out myself. Probably you are not conscious of it yourself; but it is as true as the heavens above us, that you are not indifferent to——" She stopped. "Miss Elliott, do you dare affirm that you do not love my cousin Guy?"

At this unexpected and cruel thrust Dym grew as white as death, and her head dropped on her bosom; for a moment she shrank back as though she had received a visible blow.

Beatrix took her unresisting hand gently.

"You need not answer—I can see it for myself. I have always been afraid of this—always. Others have been to blame, not you; you ought not to have been placed in such a position."

The poor white face before her, stricken with sudden shame and dismay, moved even her to pity.

"You must not take it like this, Miss Elliott. Who could be long with Guy without loving him?" and Beatrix sighed. "These sort of feelings come gradually; you were not aware of them yourself."

"I did not know. Oh, this is too dreadful!" suddenly exclaimed Dym. Her innocent appealing eyes smote Beatrix's cold selfishness with tardy remorse; the absolute purity of her look almost inspired her with awe.

"If this were true, and I knew it," went on Dym, with a trembling lip, "you would do well to scorn me: I should not be worthy the name of woman. But I never—never—thought it was that." And a sudden overpowering blush finished her sentence.

"I can well believe it," began Beatrix, soothingly; but Dym put out a shaking hand and stopped her.

"Please don't speak to me; you mean it kindly, but I cannot bear it. I was going to say perhaps I ought to have known it; but he was so far above me I thought there was no danger; and I had no mother, not even Will, to warn me."

She covered her face and wept passionately; steadfast in her young truth, it never came into her mind to defend herself, to disarm suspicion by a pretense of well-merited anger. "Dare you affirm that you do not love my cousin?" Beatrix had said to her; and the words had brought their own conviction.

Yes, she loved him; she knew it now, innocently as a child, purely as a girl, blindly as a woman. Out of that singular friendship had come the anguish of a hopeless first love; she had dared to love her benefactor. Dym was cowering away from the thought like a frightened dove. Only one idea was in her mind: Mrs. Delaire was right, and she must leave Ingleside.

No one need have envied Beatrix's feelings as she sat silently beside the weeping girl. Her victory humiliated and punished her; in all her life she had never acted so base a part. Miss Elliott had never injured her, yet she was going near to break her heart; she was disturbing the domestic circle she had come to visit; through her means, her aunt, helpless in her blindness, would lose her adopted daughter, Florence her loving nurse and friend. Beatrix did not wrong the nobility of Dym's nature; she knew she would leave Ingleside; but some word she did say as to her own want of generosity.

"Perhaps I ought not to have said this. Will it make us enemies again, Miss Elliott?"

"You meant it for the best. I suppose one ought not to be allowed to walk beside a precipice unwarned; but I think I could have borne it better from any one else."

"You have always distrusted me," returned Beatrix, icily; "but at least you know I have my cousin's interests at heart."

"I shall not wrong them," was the sad answer. "You need not fear that I shall stay here, Mrs. Delaire; nothing could keep me here now—nothing—nothing!" clasping her hands in despair in spite of herself.

Mrs. Delaire could not help admiring the girl's courage and resolution.

She watched her for a moment, almost enviously; the slight girlish figure, the drooping head, the little dark face that had suddenly grown so wan and wistful.

"I suppose I may go now?" Dym said, turning to the door.

She did not wait for any answer; she almost staggered when a rush of April sunshine met her outside, the sweet spring sunshine that pervaded everything. Down-stairs in the hall, doors were opening and shutting; Florence's baby laughter sounded from the terrace, Guy's grave voice answering. "Run in, my darling; these northern winds are treacherous," she heard him say.

Dym leaned against the wall, faint and dizzy. Was she never to hear that voice again? was he to miss his little friend every day—always? was she to go away from them all?

"Oh, Will! Will! if I could only die!" groaned the unhappy girl, hiding her face in her hands, and a horror and darkness of despair fell upon her.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DARKEST BEFORE DAWN.

EVERY one thought that Miss Elliott looked strangely ill that night.

The Fortescues and Trevors and Humphrey Nethecote were dining up at the Great House that evening, and Dym, who had spent the afternoon in her own room in a confused trance of suffering, had been obliged to rouse herself at last, and, after bathing her aching eyes and head, to creep down-stairs, trusting that under the shade of the friendly twilight she

would be able to steal to her usual corner beside Mrs. Chichester without challenging special observation. But on this occasion the Fates were against her.

The lamps were already lighted as she entered the drawing-room. Humphrey had possession of her corner, and the squire, contrary to his usual custom before dinner, was lounging on the rug in his favorite attitude, carrying on a somewhat one-sided conversation with his cousin.

Beatrix was not quite so ready as usual with her answer; she appeared absent and ill at ease. She started almost nervously as Dym entered; a quick flush passed over her face. Guy did not seem to notice it: he talked on indolently till Humphrey's shocked voice reduced him to momentary silence.

"Why, Dym, what ever have you done with yourself? Some one told me you were ill," he began, in his cheery good-natured way.

"I have had a bad headache," stammered Dym, taking refuge in a seat beside Mrs. Chichester, and wishing in a sort of agony that Humphrey would desist from his questions; she commanded her voice with difficulty, so as not to alarm Mrs. Chichester, who was always anxious when anything ailed her favorite.

"You must have a shocking headache, my dear, for your hands are like ice, and your face was quite burning when you kissed me just now."

"The fire is so hot," returned Dym, struggling for composure, and shielding her face with her hand. "Humphrey, would you mind handing me that screen? Thank you. I am only a little faint. I shall be able to talk presently." And she gave him such an appealing glance to be silent, that Humphrey, sorely perplexed as he was, could not fail to comprehend her, and at last consented to leave her in peace.

Dym drew a long breath of relief as he left her. Her screen shielded her from observation. Mr. Chichester was still talking: he had not noticed her, then; if she could only elude his penetrating eyes, all would be well; she must get through this evening; by and by there would be time to think and to form her plans.

"Do you think you need come in to dinner, Miss Elliott?" Dym started, and the screen fell from her hand. Mr. Chichester quietly restored it. He had come noiselessly round to

her side, and was leaning on his mother's chair, but his question was so low-toned that it only reached the ear for which it was intended.

"Thank you; I have only a bad headache; it will go off presently," faltered poor Dym. She did not dare lift her eyelids, but the grave comprehending tenderness of Mr. Chichester's voice brought the color to her face.

"Is there any necessity to put such a force on yourself?" he persisted, gently. "You are either very ill or very unhappy. I wish"—in a half-whimsical, half-serious tone—"I wish I knew what was troubling my little friend."

"Don't, Mr. Chichester. Oh, if you would only leave me!" gasped out the poor child. She really hardly knew what she was saying: her temples throbbed with nervous agony, a dull sickening pain was at her heart, she felt physically faint and ill. "If only he would not be kind to me," she said to herself. "If I could only go away somewhere out of the reach of his voice." She had a dull sort of consciousness that she had been taken at her word, that Mr. Chichester was gone and his place was taken by Humphrey.

"You are not to come down to dinner: the squire forbids it," he whispered, loudly. "Perhaps the quiet may do your head more good. I heard him order Stewart to bring you some strong coffee. Try and rest a little, and perhaps in an hour you may be better." Dym gave a feeble smile in answer. When the room was empty, she took possession of one of the couches and drank her coffee. How good of him to interpose and shield her in this way! how could she have sat through the long dinner between Mrs. Trevor and Humphrey, and opposite Beatrix's scrutinizing eyes? "Perhaps he only thinks I am ill, and will forgive my petulance; but how could I tell him to go away when he was so kind—so very kind?"

Dym was able to pronounce herself somewhat better when the ladies made their appearance in the drawing-room. She shrank away from Mrs. Delaire's advances, however, and placed herself under Mrs. Trevor's wing.

Mr. Chichester found them talking, to all appearance very comfortably.

"Has my prescription taken effect?" he said, standing opposite them, and giving Dym one of his most critical glances Dym felt his tone was a little cool.

"My head is certainly less troublesome," she returned, evasively. "The coffee was much better than the dinner, Mr. Chichester."

"Humph!" was his sole answer, turning on his heel, and for the rest of the evening he did not again approach her corner.

Dym slipped away as soon as the guests had gone. She made some hasty excuse that Mrs. Chichester wanted her, and did not again re-enter the drawing-room, where Guy and his cousin were the only occupants.

Florence was awake, for a wonder. Dym lay down on the bed beside her, in her white dress, and took the little creature in her arms, and waited patiently till she had fallen asleep with her head on her shoulder. "She would not hold her often in this way," she thought; and all at once it came into her mind how sadly Flossie would miss her. "She loves her father dearly, but she has not given him all her heart," she said to herself. And involuntarily she pressed the sleeping child closer to her breast as the prospect of their speedy separation came upon her. Dym never knew how the long hours of that night passed away; she could hear the church clock chiming out the quarters one by one. Presently the cock crowed, and a faint dusky light came stealing up the valley. Her eyeballs burned, the dull heavy throbbing at her head went on ceaselessly; towards morning fatigue and pain overpowered her, and she slept. Phyllis found her later on still in her white dress, with Florence nestled close beside her.

"Why, you have never been to bed at all, miss!" gasped out Phyllis, open-eyed and anxious; "dear heart, you will take cold and be sick, and no wonder, neither."

"Hush, Phyllis! I fell asleep without undressing: that was all; it was very wrong. Please say nothing of this to Dorothy." Dym felt she had been incautious when she saw Phyllis's puzzled look of alarm. She dressed quickly, and was in her accustomed place at the breakfast-table long before Mrs. Delaire made her appearance. Guy and his child came in later hand-in-hand.

"I hope you are better this morning, Miss Elliott," Beatrix had said to her. Mr. Chichester merely gave her a scrutinizing glance as he shook hands.

"What are you going to do with yourself this morning, Trichy?" he observed, as he sat down.

"I thought, perhaps, as it is so fine, we might ride over to Knaresborough," she returned; "it is too far for Florence, but you and I might go."

He shook his head.

"You must leave me out, if you please. I have business this morning."

"Not those tiresome farm-accounts, Guy? they could wait, surely; and these April mornings are so delicious." There was a trace of impatience in Beatrix's tone.

"I will send down a note to Latimer; it is a pity you should be disappointed of your ride," returned her cousin, quietly. "My business is almost as unfortunate as your fit of the vapors yesterday, eh, Trichy?" And there was a lurking tone in Guy's voice that made Beatrix color with vexation. Do what she would, she could not make this man yield to one of her caprices: he would set aside her requests in the coolest way, if they did not meet with his approval.

She rose from the table now with a displeased air.

"Do not trouble yourself to send a note to the vicarage You know I dislike Mr. Fortescue's company; if you will not ride with me yourself, Guy, I do not wish for any other escort."

"To-morrow, then," he returned, good-humoredly. "Suppose you keep my mother company this morning." And Beatrix, vexed as she was, did not dare to press the matter closely.

Dym had left the room, and was hurrying across the hall, when she heard Mr. Chichester's step behind her.

"Miss Elliott, have you any very pressing duty summoning you at the present moment?"

"I was going up to Mrs. Chichester: she expects—that is—I always read to her in the morning."

"Headache or no headache, I suppose? I have sent my cousin Beatrix to sit with her. Come in here a moment, please: I want to speak to you." And Mr. Chichester opened the library door. But Dym, for the first time in her life, hesitated to obey.

"I must go; I am sure your mother wants me," she persisted, keeping her ground. But her color varied dangerously.

Mr. Chichester gave her one of his peremptory looks.

"Do you wish me to remind you that I have a right to be obeyed," he said, so gravely that Dym did not venture on a

second remonstrance. Mr. Chichester's slight austerity vanished as he placed a chair for her.

"You are so unlike yourself that you make me unlike myself," he said, with a smile that was evidently meant to atone for his speech. "Come, Miss Elliott, drop this reserve that so ill becomes you, and tell me frankly what ailed you last night."

The question was so sudden and so unexpected that Dym lost her presence of mind. "Don't ask me. Oh, I'm so unhappy!" she said, hiding her face in her hands.

"So I suspected," was the quiet answer. "You are not subject to fits of vapors too, are you? Come," and the shielding hands were taken down and held for a moment, "don't treat me to women's most persuasive arguments,—you know what a horror men have of tears, but tell me—I have a right to know—what has been troubling you."

His voice, with its old kind drollery, touched on too painful a chord. Dym snatched her hands away, and for a little while answer was impossible. Only between the slender girlish fingers the hot tears fell fast—tears of sorrow and shame, of doubt and bitter yearning.

Mr. Chichester stood looking at her for a moment, and there was a shade on his face as he turned away and walked slowly up and down the room. Evidently there was something here for which he was not prepared. He had had one glimpse of her face before she had hidden it from his view, and its wild look of sorrow almost appalled him.

Dym hoped he would leave her; but he was only giving her time to recover herself. Presently, when she had grown a little calmer, he took the seat beside her.

"Miss Elliott, do you know you are trying my patience sorely? No; no more tears, my child," with a touch of peremptoriness. "I see I shall have to make you afraid of me, after all. What has my cousin said or done to annoy you?"

No answer; only the tell-tale crimson mounting to the very roots of her hair.

"Beatrix and you had a long talk together yesterday. Trichy had a fit of vapors, which certainly lasted all the evening, for I never saw her so unlike herself; even Mrs. Fortescue noticed it. And I have never known you before suffer from these intense sick-headaches."

"One must be ill sometimes," she returned, evasively.

"Do you think it cures them to do without your night's rest? You understand nursing very poorly," with a keen glance that made her shiver. How had her long vigil reached his ears? Could Phyllis have betrayed her?

Her miserable night was not the best preparation for the endurance of the day's trial. Dym felt so weak and wretched that she was utterly defenseless; not a spark of her old courage remained. She must guard her secret—so much her woman's pride told her—but after that it mattered little what became of her.

The pale rigidity of her features smote Guy Chichester's heart with generous pity.

"Forgive me if I pain you," he continued, gently, "but it is my duty to find out this. Would you rather have me speak to my cousin?"

"No—oh, no!" in a deep voice of misery.

"Then you must be perfectly frank with me yourself. Tell me, Miss Elliott, have Beatrix and you quarreled?"

Dym considered a moment. "Not in the way you mean. We disagree in opinion: that is all. Wait a moment," pressing her hands on her temples in a bewildered sort of way, as though trying to collect her thoughts for a great effort. "I want to tell you something, Mr. Chichester: you may have to know it soon—I have made up my mind to leave Ingleside."

"To leave us!" in a tone of astonished incredulity.

Dym had made a desperate plunge; she went on rapidly. "It was you who brought me here first, and you have a right to know. Flossie can do without me now, and your mother will easily find some one else to replace me. I have quite made up my mind to go; nothing you say can shake my resolution."

"Then in that case I need not try," was the somewhat dry rejoinder. "I suppose I may ask the reasons for this sudden and singular resolution?"

Her reasons! Dym was reduced to silence now.

"Have I unfortunately done anything to displease you?"

"You, Mr. Chichester? oh, no." Dym's grateful look was sufficiently eloquent.

"My mother, then?"

"Your mother is goodness itself. She is the dearest, the kindest——" Dym was nearly breaking down again.

"Then it is as I suspected, and Beatrix is at the bottom of the mischief. Oh, you women!" getting up from his seat and pacing the room impatiently. He was becoming angry now.

"Mrs. Delaire has never liked my being here," went on Dym, in a stifled voice; "she says and thinks things that make me wretched."

"Has she said anything that makes it impossible for you to remain?" demanded Mr. Chichester, sternly. There was no misunderstanding his meaning. Dym grew whiter and whiter under those searching eyes.

"You need not answer. I begin to have a glimmering of the truth now. You could not tell me this yourself, of course. Never mind: I will take steps to silence Beatrix's nonsense. I would not have believed it of her," he muttered, still more angrily.

He was about to leave the room, when a sudden thought seemed to strike him, and he made a hasty stride back to her chair.

"If I make it all right—if Beatrix apologizes—you will not persist in your foolish intention of leaving us?"

She shook her head sorrowfully. "There is no apology needed. You are mistaken, Mr. Chichester. I must go."

"Nonsense!" he continued, impatiently; "you know so little of the world that you are not competent to decide on this point. Fools will talk; but wise men will not heed them. You are justly hurt and aggrieved: when you are older these things will not sting quite so badly. Leave me to bring Beatrix to reason; she shall apologize to you before many hours are over. Don't you know it would break my mother's heart to lose her adopted daughter?" He was turning away again, but Dym sprang after him and laid her hand on his arm: her face was perfectly ghastly.

"Mr. Chichester, you must not; I cannot bear it."

"I must not do what, my child?"

"Speak to your cousin. She is not to blame; she meant to be most kind. It is not her fault that I am in a false position. It is my own wish; I must go."

His pertinacity seemed cruel. It was depriving her of her last chance.

"You must allow me to judge whether I am to speak to

my cousin or not." And there was a touch of haughtiness in Mr. Chichester's manner. Dym's look of mingled reproach and despair protested silently against his harshness.

"Can you not trust me?" he asked, more gently. "Your brother would not have recommended your acting for yourself in such an emergency."

"Oh, Will! Will!" Dym could not quite suppress the ring of misery in her voice. She let Mr. Chichester place her passively in a corner of the couch. Even before he left the room her head dropped on the cushions with a child's utter abandonment of weakness. She had fought out her piteous little battle, and had been worsted. In spite of her desperate determination, she had felt a very reed in the hands of this man, whose will was so strong and arbitrary for good. He had not suspected her secret: he had attributed her reluctance to remain to mere motives of maidenly modesty. Beatrix had told her she was in a false position; but would Mrs. Delaire guard it equally well? Dym in her innocence thought she would certainly try to shield her, and if it had not been for Beatrix's evil temper she would have been perfectly right in her surmise.

But Guy knew how to be provoking, and it was not easy to evade his lynx-eyed vigilance. The interview between the cousins was a long and stormy one, and when it was over Beatrix shut herself up in her own room for the remainder of the evening.

When a short time had elapsed, Dym made an attempt to go up to Mrs. Chichester, but the first movement brought back dizziness and faintness, and she was obliged to remain in enforced idleness. Phyllis brought her luncheon. Mrs. Chichester had gone down to the vicarage—Mrs. Fortescue had sent for her and Florence. Phyllis thought Mrs. Delaire had gone with them. The squire had started for a long walk with Kelpie, and Mr. Nethecote had sent up to know how Miss Elliott was.

"And I might have told him, miss, you were looking rarely worse, for there isn't a speck of color in your face," added Phyllis, in a vexed voice. Dym smiled faintly. It was a relief to own herself really ill, and decline the tempting meal Phyllis's foresight had prepared. She drank some wine and lay down again. This perfect quiet was bracing her

numb faculties to fresh efforts. She must face her difficulties, and not sink under them; she thought, come what might, she must not forfeit her own self-respect.

She had fallen into a slight doze in the twilight, and had just wakened with a start, when there was a light tap at the door, and Mr. Chichester entered.

"You are just where I left you this morning," was his only greeting. "I told them not to disturb you. I hope you have properly repaired last night's ravages."

"I am better, very much better," she answered, gratefully. "Has Mrs. Chichester returned yet?"

"Yes, my mother has come back, I believe. I saw Florence just now," rather absently. "Miss Elliott, without renewing our previous conversation, I want you to make me one promise."

"If I can—that is, if it be right," she returned, timidly, glancing up at him. Was it the firelight, or did his face look strangely pale and drawn?

"Promise me that you will not speak to my mother about leaving us for three days, not till I have spoken to you again; only three days, remember."

"I can easily promise that."

"Beatrix tells me she had no intention of hurting you with ill-timed advice. We must give people their due—we all have our faults. If I might venture on giving you advice, Miss Elliott, it would be to dismiss all this from your mind for the next three days; be calm, be content, and trust me." As he spoke, he put his hand upon her head with a fatherly gesture; and, looking up, she saw the sad kindly gleam of his eyes.

A moment after, the door closed, and Guy Chichester was alone—never more alone!

Alone! Alas, what bitter thoughts were lining the man's brow as he stood with arms tightly folded across his breast, and the flickering firelight playing on his bowed head and gray beard.

"Who would have thought of this?" he muttered. "Poor innocent child! and to think Beatrix is making her her dupe; there was heart-break in her face. I could see it for myself; and yet fool that I was never to dream of that! and then my mother and Florence—Florence will fret herself to death for her. Is there no other way, no other way but this? Oh,

Honor, my darling, my darling, the only woman I ever loved, or that I ever can love, come to me one moment and tell me what I am to do in this sore strait." He spread his hands with a groan into the empty air, and then they dropped heavily to his side. Alas, these hours of desolation and anguish were not new to the lonely man, but to-night his soul was torn by conflicting passions, generous pity for the girl he had befriended, tender compassion for his mother and child, whose lives were so closely bound up with hers. At times the whole chivalry of his nature seemed to rise up and plead for these defenseless ones. "If I can make them happy, what does it matter what becomes of me?" he thought. "She will be a mother to my child; she has never known any other; she is the sunshine of our house. Lonely as I am now, I feel I shall be doubly so if she leave us. No, for my own sake I cannot let her go; and yet is there no other way than this?" He sighed heavily as the gong disturbed him from his musing.

It was a silent party that gathered round the dinner-table that night; Beatrix was absent, the squire taciturn and gloomy, Dym sad and conscious and shrinking from notice. Once, and once only, during the evening, Guy roused from his reverie. Florence had clambered up into Miss Elliott's lap for a good-night kiss. Mr. Chichester suddenly raised his eyes and regarded the pair long and fixedly. The child had her arms tightly round Miss Elliott's neck, the bright golden head reposed lovingly on her shoulder; the two were whispering their confidences together. "You must carry me up to bed," begged Florence, sleepily rubbing her eyes; and Dym rose obediently.

"You must say good-night to papa, Flossie," she whispered, and she held out the child to him as she spoke. Guy stooped over them both as he kissed Florence fondly; he shielded his eyes and watched her as she left the room, still carrying the child. What a young creature she looked! a small slight figure in a white dress, with a sweet, dark face that he had somehow grown to love.

She was not far off being very pretty, he thought to himself; there was such a tender, appealing look in her eyes sometimes, and the small shining head was set so daintily on her slim throat; how pleasant the touch of her hand had been to him when he had stood alone with her that wild March morning; but even as these thoughts flitted through his mind, there

suddenly came before him the vision of another face—a grave beautiful face—with a broad low brow and solemn gray eyes that opened softly. "There was none like her; no wonder the angels claimed her so soon, she was too good for earth," he sighed. A moment after, when his mother spoke to him, he left the room, and no one saw the squire's face again that night.

Dym never spent such a strange three days in her life. A sort of oppression and unreality was upon her. At times her conversation with Beatrix appeared a dream. Mrs. Delaire, when she met her next, seemed strangely subdued, and treated her with marked kindness. It was true Dym did not respond to her advances: the girl was so sore of spirit that a word wounded her; she shrank away from the least approach to confidence on Mrs. Delaire's part, and confined herself entirely to the society of Mrs. Chichester and the child. She would sit for hours at her friend's feet, looking up at the blind, placid face as though she were learning how to take leave of it. Mrs. Chichester hardly knew what to make of her *protégée's* silence and sadness.

Dym only saw Mr. Chichester in the evening, and then he scarcely ever addressed her. Each day his face seemed to grow thinner and sadder. Dym's heavy heart grew heavier as she looked at him.

He must be hurt with her, after all—he was sorry she was going—he was sad, displeased. Poor Dym! There was no form of self-tormenting in which she did not indulge during those endless three days.

They came to an end at last.

Dym had been sent to the library on some trifling commission. Mr. Chichester was going out, and wanted some papers copied. Guy never asked his cousin to do anything for him now—so Dym sat through the long afternoon, accomplishing her task with her usual neatness and dispatch, till the last sheet was finished. She was still stooping over her work, when the squire entered, bringing a current of fresh air with him.

"I am afraid I have set you too long a task," he said, looking over her shoulder. "How neatly you do this work! You would make a capital copying-clerk. Come to the fire and rest a little. I am sure both eyes and hands must be

weary." And, as Dym hesitated, he quietly added, "I want to speak to you," and Dym had no alternative but to obey. Mr. Chichester followed her, and took up his old position. "My three days' grace has expired, I believe," he said, looking thoughtfully, not at her, but at the fire, "and you have a right to expect that our painful conversation should be renewed. Do you still persist in your former resolution, Miss Elliott?" turning on her so abruptly that Dym started; but she contrived to answer him with tolerable firmness.

"I have quite made up my mind to leave Ingleside and seek another situation."

"And you decline giving me your reasons?"

"I cannot—that is—I hoped you would understand that—you would not think me ungrateful, I mean," faltered Dym, growing white again.

"You need not fear misconstruction from me," he replied, calmly. "As far as I can judge of your motives, they do you infinite credit. My cousin has unfortunately raised a question that ought never to have been mooted, and I can well understand that you cannot remain here happily in your present capacity."

"I am glad you approve——" she began, in a timid voice, and then stopped.

"Pardon me, I disapprove so strongly that I do not mean to let you go—if it be in my power to keep you—Miss Elliott," speaking now very gravely. "After what has passed, there is only one way in which you can remain happily under my roof, and that is—do not be startled, my child—by becoming my wife."

"Mr. Chichester!" Dym rather breathed than said the words: her infinite surprise almost deprived her of utterance.

Mr. Chichester stood and watched her varying color sadly, and then he came up to her and took her hand.

"I asked you to trust me. I have thought over it all: believe me, this is the only way. Is the idea very repellent to you?" endeavoring to get a glimpse of her downcast face. But Dym hid all of it she could.

"No! oh, no! but I am so unworthy," she whispered; "and then you do not love me, Mr. Chichester?"

"I have something to ask on the other side of the question. Do you think you could care for me, Dym?"

He had never called her by her name before, and the word thrilled her with incredible sweetness. Care for him! did she not love him so that her heart was nearly breaking within her?

She lifted her face, covered with burning blushes, as she strove to answer him. Something in the shy young face seemed to move Mr. Chichester strangely, for he suddenly drew it to him and kissed her brow.

"It is settled, then. But, my child, I want you to listen to me for a moment. I will believe that you can care for me, gray-haired, middle-aged man that I am, whom trouble, and not years, have made hard and stern. But on my part I dare not deceive you. The best part of my life, my hopes, my love, is buried in Honor's grave."

She pressed his hand timidly—the kind hand that had done so much for her and hers: he need not have told her that, she thought.

"You are so young that you have a right to expect an undivided heart. There are many men who would give you their best and truest love; I am not one of those, Dym."

"I know it," she whispered. "I do not expect it. I never dared hope for even this."

He smiled a little at the childish *naïveté* that betrayed so much: and then his tone resumed its gravity.

"When I lost Honor I lost the dearest thing earth had to offer me. I knew when she died I could never love any woman again as I had loved her. In some sense I am a broken-hearted man for life; but I think"—his voice changing into tenderness—"I should be a little less lonely if you will come to me, my dear."

And this from him. Dym was fairly weeping now.

"I have always loved my little friend dearly; she has come into my desolate home and made it pleasant to me. May I hope to keep her there always?"

No answer, only as his hand touched hers caressingly she suddenly stooped, and her girlish lips set the purest seal to her long love and fidelity.

"God bless you, my child! I will try to make you happy," were Guy Chichester's last words to her that night; and Dym's affection and loyalty found no fault with the sadness of his tone. Was she not his own—did she not belong to him—her

lord, her benefactor? Dym's tumultuous heart could find no room for doubt. With such thoughts as these she lay down to sleep that night, like a veritable child wearied out with overmuch joy, and oblivious of clouds of to-morrow.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CRUEL AS THE GRAVE.

BEFORE they parted for the night, Dym timidly sought permission from Mr. Chichester to share her secret with his mother, but she was a little surprised at the hesitation with which he acceded to her request. Her look of astonishment recalled him.

"You have promised to trust me," he said, with a grave smile at her perplexed face. "In fact, you have given me a very full and convincing proof of your faith in me a very few hours ago. Am I asking too much if I beg you to trust me a little longer?"

"Do you wish me not to tell your mother, then? I only thought——" Dym's perfect faith was jarring sadly with her old sturdy honesty. How was she to keep from Mrs. Chichester that she was engaged to her son?

Dym's face was always eloquent, and Mr. Chichester understood her thoroughly.

"You would be a very transparent deceiver, I am afraid. No, my child; I never meant to lay such a yoke on your conscience. Tell my mother, by all means. I only ask that for a little while she may be the only confidante. Do you understand me?" taking her hand with one of his persuasive looks.

"Of course I shall do as you wish," she replied, coloring high under it. "There is no one else whom I care to tell, unless, perhaps, it were Humphrey," with a quick throb of pain as she thought how Will would have rejoiced in her happiness; and, as though he again understood her, he drew her closer to him.

"I am almost glad that you have nothing to give up for

me," he said, tenderly, after a minute's silence. "You have always seemed to belong to us somehow. My cousin is going away to-morrow to stay with some friends in Cumberland. On her return I shall tell her myself; but until things are definitely settled I have no wish that our affairs should furnish food for village gossip. Only," with a droll look, "I think with you that Humphrey has a right to know. I am afraid he wanted somebody very badly himself once upon a time. Would you rather he should hear it from me, Dym?" And Dym shyly answered, "Yes."

It was well that Dym was too young and inexperienced, as well as too humble-minded, to expect much attention from her *fiancé*, for certainly Mr. Chichester was not a demonstrative lover. Dym's unselfishness and devotion saved her from many a chill feeling of disappointment.

After a little time he resumed his ordinary manner with her, and, except that he sought her society more frequently, and on all occasions paid the utmost deference to her opinion and wishes, there was nothing that could betray to the most watchful eyes that he had exchanged the friend for the lover.

A thorough understanding prevailed between them, but it could hardly be called courtship; he had always been kind and gentle with her, and now he was doubly so. With instinctive delicacy he contrived to infuse a new element of respect into his manner; he was less abrupt and more yielding. Dym was often distressed at the way in which he would set aside his own wishes or plans if he thought he could minister to her pleasure. A shadow of disrespect to Miss Elliott was sure to bring down his severest displeasure on the offender, tacitly rather than by word. He was proving to her that she was the woman whom the master of Ingleside delighted to honor; and yet was there nothing lacking in his devotion?

Dym thought her lover perfect; to her there was simply no flaw in her happiness. He was a little grave and absent in his manner, perhaps, when they were alone together, and yet Dym always felt that her presence soothed and pleased him. It never entered into the simple girl's heart to wonder why he spoke so little of their approaching marriage, but rather shunned the subject, as though it involved some present difficulty and pain. He would talk to her about herself, about Florence's future, and dwell long and gratefully on their mutual affection for the

child; or else he would relapse into silence, and only by the rare caressing touch of his hand on her hair would he show that he was conscious that she was still by him; and yet after a brief absence he would welcome her back so gladly that Dym knew that in some way she had become necessary to him.

But he never told her that he loved her, neither did he express a wish that she should call him by any other than the old name. "Guy,"—she said it sometimes softly to herself, to see how it sounded, but somehow it never came naturally. "Perhaps when we are married he will teach me to say it," she thought. "I suppose he will not then be Mr. Chichester to me."

Dym bungled sadly when she began her story of her engagement to her friend. It was a pity no one was there to see the girl's sparkling blushing face. Before she had half finished she was clasped fondly in Mrs. Chichester's arms.

"I never dared to hope this," she sobbed. "Oh, my dear, you have made me so happy! Guy will never go away again now. I don't know how it is, Dym, but you have always been like my own daughter to me; but I shall love you all the better now." But Mrs. Chichester wisely kept her raptures for Dym; her womanly instinct led her to say very little to her son.

"I am glad of this, Guy," she said, detaining him by the hand when he came up to wish her good-night—"very glad indeed; you could not have done better for yourself and Florence."

"I am sure of it for Florence," he returned, briefly.

"Not for yourself, Guy?" in an anxious tone.

"For myself of course," with a light laugh. "Do you think I am capable of such a piece of self-sacrifice as that?"

Mrs. Chichester sighed.

"I know what this must be to you. Things are so different, and you have changed with them; but you will not refuse to let me wish you happiness, my son."

"No, indeed," he replied, speaking as though he were touched, and bending down to kiss her.

"It will not be unalloyed happiness just now, but it will come in time, Guy. It must, it will; she is so young, and loves you so dearly, you will make her what you will."

"She is a noble-hearted little creature, and I shall do my

utmost to make her happy," was his reply, in a tone of deep feeling; but as he dropped her hand Mrs. Chichester felt herself a little damped by his lack of enthusiasm.

"He has not forgotten Honor, in spite of his new fancy," she thought; "Guy is so faithful." And she called Dym to her side and tenderly caressed the girl, as though she would make amends for some fancied slight.

Mr. Chichester kept his promise of telling Humphrey Nethecote. Humphrey came up to Ingleside one evening to wish her joy.

"The squire has told me, my dear," he said, taking her two little hands, and looking at her fondly. "Somehow I have suspected this all along, Dym."

"Oh, Humphrey, how could you?"

"It was not possible for him to see much of you and not love you," he returned, in a voice that was a little husky: "it wouldn't be in man's nature, especially now he is so lonely and sad. Don't you feel that Honor will be glad to know you are taking care of him and the child?"

"Dear Humphrey, how good of you to say that!" she whispered, with the tears in her eyes.

"Well, if he makes you happy, that is all I ask of him: you must not expect too much of him at first; the squire is not the man he was, but he will pick up after a time. I should have guessed by your face something pleasant had happened. Folks will say you are young to be the squire's sweetheart, when they see you beside him."

"He is not so old," she replied, pouting; "Mr. Chichester is not quite forty yet: he told me so."

"Nay, but the trouble has changed him. Well, heaven bless you, my dear; when you are a happy wife you won't forget your old friend Humphrey?" somewhat wistfully.

"Never, Humphrey! What are you thinking about? Are you not our dearest friend—his as well as mine?"

"Nay, nay, not the dearest; but as true a one as you need have." And, moved by the tender sadness of his expression, Dym, for the second time in her life, lifted up her face and kissed him.

The weeks passed on. April, with its chilly freshness and vaporous sunshine, was over, and the May hawthorn was filling the valley with sweetness.

Dym was getting used to her position now; and the clear young voice could be heard again caroling among the shrubberies in the early morning; her light step had recovered its springy tread; the glow of a new hope shone in the clear dark eyes and lit them with strange brilliancy. Guy would sigh softly to himself as he watched her about the house.

"She is so happy that it would be cruel to shadow her brightness," he thought. "All I marvel is, that she can be so easily satisfied; she must feed on her own loving fancies. Sometimes I am afraid she will wake up and find I give her very little in return for her devotion; it is not always so with other men; the second love deadens the first to a great measure; they remember, but they are consoled. Will it ever be in her power to console me for Honor?"

And once this thought of his found utterance in words.

"What makes you look so happy, Dym?" he said, when he found her singing to herself as she arranged the flower-vases. Dym blushed very prettily—she always did when he spoke to her—and then she mutely offered him a rose.

"Thank you, but I want the answer too," he said, detaining both the flower and the hand, and looking at her with a sad sort of envy. Dym glanced at him shyly before she bethought herself of her reply.

"How can I help it," she said, at last, "when you are so good to me?"

Guy smiled at that.

"Am I good to you, my child? I am afraid you are not an impartial judge, Dym. What other girl of your age would be content with a sober middle-aged lover? Are you not afraid sometimes people will take you for my daughter?" pulling at his long gray beard with a comical gesture—people said his prematurely gray hair had aged Guy Chichester wonderfully. Dym treated him to one of her bewitching smiles in reply—they dazzled even him sometimes. In spite of what people might say, was he not always grand, lordly, altogether perfect, in her eyes? I believe Dym never could be persuaded that his beauty was not faultless; to her, her lover was a sort of Apollo and Jupiter Ammon in one.

"You are always good to me, except when you make these sort of speeches," she said, half pouting: "you are as bad as Humphrey, who is always making himself out a Methuselah.

I would not have either of you a bit different. Don't you believe it?" looking up at him wistfully.

"I believe you are under some sort of glamour," he said, half seriously, half laughing. "There, put your hat on, my child; I want you and Florence to ride over to Ripley with me;" for Mr. Chichester had taught Dym to ride, and Humphrey Nethecote had trained a pretty bay mare, and had sent it up to the Ingleside stables for Miss Elliott's special use.

The morning air was delicious, and Mr. Chichester in an unusually cheerful mood: nevertheless Dym did not entirely enjoy her ride.

"I am afraid you will be sorry to hear Beatrix is coming back to-morrow," Mr. Chichester had observed, as he lifted her into the saddle. Dym stooped over her horse's neck and stroked its mane as she answered him. She was rather silent for the next mile or two, only Guy did not notice it; somehow those few words had damped her enjoyment. Mr. Chichester detained her for a few moments that night when his mother had left the room.

"Dym, I have never given you an engaged ring. I wonder you have not noticed the omission," he began, when they were left alone.

"I thought you disliked the fuss," she returned, timidly; "it was not necessary. Besides, people might be attracted, and we could trust each other without the sign-manual of our agreement."

"Ay," his keen brown face lighting up with one of his droll smiles, "you are a good little thing, and yet I always understood young ladies regarded such things as sacred talismans."

"Of course I should like one," returned Dym, with her usual sweet honesty; "and your mother says——"

"Oh, my mother's taper fingers have been meddling, have they? Well, I have not forgotten you. Look here!" And he slipped a tiny hoop studded with pearls upon her finger. "Diamonds tell tales, and so do emeralds. This is like yourself—simple, and pure, and good—and will keep its own counsel." Dym thanked him silently, but he did not let her go just yet.

"One word more, my child. You have reposed such generous trust in me that I feel I should be undeserving of it if I

did not show you more confidence in return. You know this time of year is full of painful memories to me; I shall breathe more freely when a month or two have passed. When the autumn sets in, I propose leaving Ingleside for a few weeks; my mother can then make our engagement public, and as soon as your arrangements are completed you can join me in London, where I propose our marriage being solemnized. You will not mind a quiet wedding away from Ingleside, will you, Dym?" And Dym, trembling and flushing, faltered out a happy "No."

It was the first time that he had ever alluded to their marriage. Alas! she little knew the difficulty with which he had braced himself to the subject. Delays were useless in their position; it would be better for them both when she was once his wife; he would be very fond of her, and take good care of her, and she would be the sunshine of the house, he thought—only Guy Chichester finished with a sigh.

Dym woke from happy dreams the next morning with a strange oppression at her heart: something had happened, or was going to happen. As her eyes fell upon the hoop of pearls, she suddenly remembered Mrs. Delaire had fixed this evening for her return.

Dym scolded herself for being superstitious. Why did she always augur evil from Beatrix's visits? Her presence had often brought trouble to Dym, but surely now the spell must be broken.

Mr. Chichester had promised that he would announce their engagement to his cousin himself; it would be badly received, she knew. Dym had an instinctive feeling that Beatrix had always watched her with jealous eyes; she would regard her as a designing interloper, probably she would accuse her of intriguing. Would she meet her with cool sarcasm, or pour down the vials of her wrath on Dym's devoted head? Beatrix's envious passions were soon aroused, and on such occasions, as Dym well knew, her words could be dangerous.

Dym's lark-like voice was silent that morning; she was a little anxious and *distrait* at luncheon; Mr. Chichester noticed it.

"I am sorry we cannot have another ride together before Beatrix comes," he said, as he joined Dym at the sunny terrace window. "But this stupid business of Latimer's obliges us

to go over to York. I am afraid I shall not be back to dinner, mother, so you and Dym must do the best you can without me."

"Must you go?" sighed Dym. She followed him disconsolately out into the hall. When his horse was brought round to the door, as she looked up at him, he saw her eyes had tears in them.

"Why, my child, what ails you?" he asked, in some surprise; for it was new to him to see a shadow on that bright face.

Dym drooped her head. "She did not know."

"I believe Beatrix has become a sort of moral wet blanket to us both," he said, cheerfully. "Never mind, you shall not be troubled with her long. Why, my dear Dym!" as she suddenly clasped her hands round his arm and laid her face down upon them. Dym's timid reserve had never given way so completely, and Guy's tone was a little anxious.

"You have never been so sorry to part with me before," he said, trying to rally her. "I shall suppose all sorts of things. You must not make me too vain, Dym."

"It is not that," she returned, unsteadily. "I don't know why I want you so; but, oh, if only you need not go this afternoon?"

"You will make me wish it too, dear, if you look so sad about it. But, come, I cannot leave my little sunbeam eclipsing herself under such gloomy fancies; you must not send me off with that sort of face, Dym," as he lightly touched her forehead.

Dym gave him a misty smile at that. She slid a cold, nervous little hand in his as she wished him good-by. As he rode slowly down between the limes, he looked back and waved to her—a little shimmering gray figure, motionless in the sunlight.

Dym was alone in the drawing-room when Mrs. Delaire arrived. Their greeting was a somewhat silent one. The young widow looked fatigued and depressed, and threw herself on the lounge with a wearied air. Her face had its jaded, dissatisfied expression. She was scarcely as beautiful as usual, Dym thought, and her tones had their old sharp ring.

"Miles tells me my cousin has ridden out this afternoon,"

she said, when Dym had relieved her of her mantle and had brought her a cup of tea.

"Yes; he has been obliged to go to York with Mr. Fortescue. He has business in Harrogate, too; they will hardly be back till ten or eleven, Mr. Chichester fears."

"Mr. Fortescue generally chooses inconvenient times for business," retorted Mrs. Delaire; and there was another embarrassed silence.

Dym tried to talk on different subjects, but evidently Beatrix was not in a sociable mood. She listened with a preoccupied air, answered in monosyllables, and finally rose with a yawn.

"I am dreadfully tired; I think I had better go to Aunt Constance now. By the by, Miss Elliott, Guy said nothing in his letters about your intention of leaving Ingleside."

"I—I have changed my mind."

"You are not going?" with a sudden hard inflection in her voice that set Dym's nerves quivering again.

"Mr. Chichester asked me to stay," she returned, faintly, hanging down her head. What had become of Mrs. Chichester all this time? if only Florence would come into the room! Dym was starting away from the topic again in a sort of frightened way, but Mrs. Delaire sternly recalled her.

"My cousin asked you to stay?" she repeated, and her voice had a certain shrill tone in it. Surely she could not have heard aright. Ask Miss Elliott to stay, after what she had hinted—impossible. Guy could never have been guilty of such imprudence.

"If my cousin chose to be so rash, you need not have taken advantage of his generosity," she continued, coldly. "After what you have owned to me, it would be the grossest impropriety for you to remain under his roof."

"Stop, Mrs. Delaire! you must not speak to me in this way," interrupted Dym, beginning to tremble. Ought she to bear Beatrix's insolence now she belonged to him? She turned the hoop of pearls nervously round her finger as she spoke. The action did not escape Mrs. Delaire's sharp eyes.

"Why may I not speak to you? If you do not know what is fitting in your position, it is my duty to interfere and save you. Aunt Constance must know about this; I must tell her—warn her."

Beatrix was working herself up into a sort of passion now.

Dym humbled herself to make a final appeal.

"Mrs. Chichester knows. Why should you trouble yourself to interfere, Mrs. Delaire? I am doing you no wrong."

"How do I know that?" replied Beatrix. Her eyes flashed; her bosom heaved stormily. "How do I know that you have not thrown yourself on his compassion; that you have not induced him to—— Who gave you that?" suddenly stretching out her hand in the attitude of a tragedy queen, and pointing to the poor little hoop of pearls.

"Pearls keep their own counsel," he had said to her; but there was no evading those jealous eyes.

Dym changed color, and then womanly dignity came to her aid: evasion was impossible.

"Mr. Chichester gave me these," she said, looking up with calm eyes into Beatrix's excited face. "Now you know why you must not say these things to me; because—because I am going to be his wife."

Dym made her little confession very sweetly, but she was alarmed by its effect on Mrs. Delaire. The widow started as though she had received a shock; her pale face grew paler—she gasped for breath.

"To be his wife—Guy's wife! Impossible! I will not believe it," she muttered, sinking on a seat. Then her mood changed.

"So this wise cousin of mine has proposed to you?" she went on, in a mocking, sarcastic voice that made Dym's cheek burn.

She bowed her head in assent.

"It is like him—Quixotic and mad as usual. And you, poor fool! you—you accepted him," in a tone of infinite contempt.

"I accepted him, certainly, and we are engaged," returned Dym, steadily.

Her quiet dignity seemed to provoke Beatrix beyond endurance.

"And this is your love and gratitude to your benefactor! Poor love—pitiable gratitude, I call it, Miss Elliott, to allow him to lower himself to such a sacrifice as that. But he shall not, if I can save him from it," stamping her slender foot, as though the mere thought were insupportable to her. "You

have acted so meanly that I shall not try to spare you. Ay, you may love him, Miss Elliott, but you will never be his wife. Girl as you are, you will shrink from the thought when I tell you Guy Chichester is only marrying you out of pity."

Dym's face grew almost convulsed. "How dare you—how dare you say that, Mrs. Delaire?"

"I dare to tell you the truth," replied Beatrix, scornfully. "Do you think he could ever choose such as you after Honor? What! you have lived under his roof all these years, and you have not discovered that Guy's weak generosity is his only fault? He is doing this for his mother's and his child's sake, and because he knows you love him."

"Oh, heavens! she has told him!" cried the miserable girl, clasping her hands before her face.

"Yes, I told him," returned Beatrix, in the same freezing tone. "I would have kept it from him if I could, for I was afraid of this, but he made me angry, and then it all came out. I told him you were leaving Ingleside because you were dying of love for him. Do you wish to hear how he answered me?" But Dym only wrung her hands and groaned heavily. In her darkest hour had she ever felt despair like this? Oh, God! that she should suffer such bitter shame, and at the hands of this woman!

"He looked at me," went on Beatrix, in the same hard voice, "as though I had dealt him a blow. 'Could you not have saved us both from this, Trichy?—could anything more unfortunate have befallen us all? Poor child! in whichever way I act I must wrong her. I could never love her as I love Honor—never, never!' You should have seen his face as he said it: it was pitiful—painful!"

"In mercy, and as you are a woman, hush!" Beatrix hardly recognized the voice. Her passion was dying out, and a sort of horror at her own work came over her as she looked at Miss Elliott. The girl was lying back in her chair, with her eyes closed and her poor lips quite drawn and blue; it was as though she had heard her own death-warrant.

"Are you faint? Shall I get you something?" Beatrix was a mere girl still; an uncomfortable feeling of remorse began to take possession of her. Dym just stirred, and shook her head. Mrs. Delaire watched her irresolutely.

Dym's dry lips were moving now; she signed to Beatrix to come closer.

"On your honor, is this true? As there is a heaven above us, have you not lied to me in this?" holding up her young hand solemnly with an appeal that was almost awful to Beatrix.

But it was too late to undo the mischief now.

"I have told you the truth," she returned, sullenly; "you must blame yourself, not me, for this miserable business."

"I shall try to forgive you some day, I suppose," faltered the poor child, "but not now—not now: the words would choke me," putting her hand to her head and looking at Beatrix in a bewildered sort of way. "Tell them I am not well—no one must come near me; I have work to do. I must think—think—think," with a ghastly smile that somehow curdled Beatrix's blood. As she walked from the room, Beatrix saw she put out a groping hand suddenly before her to steady herself.

She must think, this was her one idea: tears were useless, she must not grow faint. As she turned the key in the door of the little Gray Room which she still used as a dressing-room, and sank down on the floor at the foot of her little bed, she told herself that she had work that would take all her strength to do; and a settled prayer resolved itself in her heart that she might have power to accomplish it.

Dym was not sinking under her misery: she was looking it in the face with a calmness that was akin to despair.

The evening sunshine flooded the terraces and gardens, and streamed in at the window till the gray dress was streaked with bars of gold; the stars glimmered; the moon shone cold and clear; the night-breezes stole into the darkened room; and still the crouching figure sat on with its face buried in its hands. Twice only it stirred—once when they brought food to her door, and a feeble impatient voice had bade them set it down and go away, and again when verging towards midnight the clear sharp clang of the gate sounded in the distance, and firm footsteps drew nearer and nearer, pausing for a moment under her window and then passing rapidly round to the front entrance. As they died away, Dym shivered, closed the window, and kindled a light.

She had thought it out, and the time for her work had come.

"As there is a heaven above us, have you not lied to me in this?" she had demanded solemnly of Beatrix; but even as she asked it she knew that the bitter truth had been told her.

He was marrying her out of pity: the man's vast tenderness, his chivalrous nature, had prepared for her this degradation.

"Guy's weak generosity is his only fault: he is doing this for his mother's and his child's sake, and because he knows you love him," Beatrix had said to her, and the ground had not opened and swallowed her in her shame.

No, she had not lied. Little by little the awful truth was stealing upon her. How white and drawn his face had looked in that twilight—that evening—when he had come to her and pleaded for three days' grace; how grave and passionless had been his voice as he wooed her! with what settled sorrow he had told her that his heart was buried in Honor's grave!

Alas! she had thought that he had wanted her for his comforter—that he had found his hearth lonely, and craved for her woman's smile to brighten it. She would have been content with so little, she thought; she would have been satisfied with the merest crumbs of love. But that he should marry her out of pity! "Thank God, I will save him from that," she said, bitterly, as she trimmed her lamp.

Her slender preparations were soon made, and then she stole into Florence's room.

The child was sleeping peacefully, with one dimpled arm flung over the coverlet. Dym stooped down and kissed it softly. "Good-by, my darling," she whispered, as she turned away.

The first streak of dawn was stealing up the valley, and the pale line of light was widening behind the gray wall of Ingleside, when a little figure, veiled and cloaked, came slowly down the terrace, with the faithful collie following it.

At the lodge-gates they paused.

"You must not come any further with me, Kelpie." And as he licked her hand irresolutely she knelt down on the ground and hugged the dog to her bosom. "Oh, good old Kelpie, dear Kelpie, go back to him; you must not forsake

him too." And her tears streamed over the rough coat and shaggy paws of her faithful companion.

Five minutes after that, the heavy gate had clanged between them. Guy heard it, and muttered drowsily to himself as he turned in his sleep.

"Good-by, dear happy Ingleside; good-by forever," she moaned, as she turned away, and the echo in her own heart went on ceaselessly, "Forever."

CHAPTER XXXV.

A SHADOW ON THE WALL.

"WHERE is Miss Elliott this morning?" were Guy Chichester's words as he entered the breakfast-room.

Beatrix, who was pouring out the coffee, bent her head over the silver urn, and feigned not to hear the question, but she listened a little anxiously to Stewart's answer.

"No one has seen Miss Elliott, sir. Dorothy—that is, Phyllis—did say to Miles that her young lady must be ill or something, for she hasn't been near Miss Florence since last evening."

Mr. Chichester made no reply; he even checked Flossie when she seemed disposed to burst into some childish confidence.

"Go on with your breakfast, Flo," he said, a little irritably, as the child looked up eagerly. "Trichy, if you have done with Stewart I should like him to fetch me the 'Times' from the station. Dison has forgotten to send it." And as soon as the servant was out of hearing, he continued, in a low voice, to his cousin, "Isn't it singular, Trichy, the child will have it that Miss Elliott never went to bed at all? She declares she came to her in the middle of the night with her bonnet and cloak on, and kissed her, and said she was going away. What could have put such nonsense into the child's head, I wonder?" But, in spite of his impatient tone, Guy looked anxious and perturbed.

Beatrix changed color. "Of course she must have been dreaming, Guy. Children have such strange fancies. Most likely Miss Elliott is taking an early walk; she complained of headache when I arrived yesterday."

"She was perfectly well when I left her," returned Mr Chichester, uneasily. "Miles told me she was not at dinner last night. I hope nothing unpleasant passed between you, Trichy?" he added, with one of his searching glances. Beatrix was paler than usual—even her cousin noticed her embarrassment. The servants' comments had already reached her ears: she knew from Phyllis that Miss Elliott's bed had not been slept in.

Beatrix drew herself up a little haughtily as Mr. Chichester spoke, but he did not repeat his question; during the rest of the meal he sat in thoughtful silence, and as soon as it was over he left the room and went straight to the library.

His hand was on the bell, when the gleam of something white on his writing-table attracted his eye, and he looked up eagerly: it was a note in Dym's handwriting.

As he opened it and the pearl hoop dropped at his feet, his face expressed bewilderment, almost alarm; but a grave, pitiful look came into his eyes as he read and re-read the few blotted sentences, and once he sighed heavily. "Poor child! poor little wounded heart!" he muttered. "Cruel, cruel!" and then his face grew dark and stern again.

"Oh, my dear, my dear, how could you have done it?" she wrote. "If I could have loved you more I must have done it, now that I know all your noble goodness. To think that after her you could stoop to me; that you could put aside your own grief to try and comfort me, poor little humble me!

"Oh, my darling, forgive me if I call you that once, I never shall again—think how I must love you when I tell you I am going away without even wishing you good-by, to save you from such a sacrifice. She has told me all: it was generous, it was like you, but why, why did you think such noble self-devotion was necessary? You have wronged me, dear, you have indeed, but you did not mean to be cruel.

"If I had left you I should have gone on loving you all my life. I am not ashamed of owning that now: why should I be? You have always been so grand, so noble, in my eyes;

and then one day, when you were old, and Florence had left you, and you wanted me, I would have come to you and been your faithful nurse and friend, and you would have been glad to see me—I know you would have been—and then this miserable mistake would not have occurred.

"But you must not be unhappy about it, or think I have acted impulsively in leaving you. I could not be your wife now, dear, could I? The very thought humbles me. Tell your mother all; she will understand and be sorry for me; and ask my darling Flossie not to fret. And now God bless you. I know He will. He will not be angry with me for leaving you so, and you must not be.

"Your faithful and loving friend,

"DYM."

Beatrix was still sitting at the deserted breakfast-table when her cousin's step sounded in the passage, and a moment after he entered.

She knew what was coming, almost before he had turned the handle of the door. Some subtle instinct warned her that he meant to overwhelm her with his reproaches. Had she gone too far? had she in her sudden madness of jealousy miscalculated this girl's influence? could it be that he loved her, after all—that it was really his desire to make her his wife? Beatrix was by no means devoid of courage, nevertheless her heart died within her when she saw his face.

"Don't, Guy! Whatever has happened, you must not blame me," she said, almost cowering away beneath that dark wrathful look. Bold as she was, how was she to confront him in his sternness? would her pride carry her through such an ordeal? "Indeed, indeed, it was not my fault," she continued, pitifully.

"Read that," was his only answer, as he took the folded paper from his breast and laid it before her. "Do not sully your lips with falsehood, Beatrix," he continued, with a slight accent of scorn. "I know exactly what passed between you, as though I had heard your every word. Oh, Trichy, Trichy," his voice breaking with sudden emotion, "I could almost find it in my heart to hate you for this, that you—you, of all people, should have wrought me this deadly wrong."

"I did not say much—I did not, indeed, Guy," she re-

turned, humbly. His anger was dreadful to her. Would she not have died to win one word of love from his lips? and now he was filling her cup to the bitter brim with his righteous scorn. "It was only a word I let fall by accident; she provoked me, she often does, Guy—indeed, you do not know Miss Elliott as well as I do. You must not be angry because I think she is not worthy of you: she has deceived you, as she has deceived others, with her artful ways."

"Take care, Beatrix," he interrupted, menacingly. His eyes flashed, and it was only by a strong effort that he controlled himself. "Take care," he repeated, more quietly: "you are speaking of my future wife. Another such word as that, and I shall be constrained to bid you see my face no more."

"Your wife!" gasped Beatrix, and some deadly suppression of feeling turned her lips white. "But she has gone—Miss Elliott has gone."

"You have driven her away for a little space," he replied, in the same hard voice; "but I am still bound to her; whenever she will she may come back, and find her place ready for her, for I swear no other woman shall be my wife."

"Guy! Guy!" But Beatrix's agonized exclamation was unheeded; he had turned away from her with that terrible look still on his face, and in another moment she was alone.

Before the next hour had elapsed, Humphrey Nethecote had been summoned to the squire's library, and for a long time the two men were closeted together.

"You may telegraph your success. If I do not hear before to-morrow night, I shall follow you," were the squire's parting words. "Be prudent; do nothing to compromise her or me, and, above all, do not let her suspect that her movements are watched.

"Let me only know she is safe: that must do for the present. We must leave her free, Humphrey. The mischief is done, and cannot be undone without time and patience."

"Oh, oh, plenty of that needed for a snarl of the devil's making. Take my advice, squire, and get rid of that woman; she was never to my mind, nor to poor Honor's either."

"I must leave that to my mother," returned Guy, with a touch of haughtiness. "I am going up to her room now. Poor dear! she will fret more than any of us. Promise to

be wary, Humphrey, for both our sakes," he continued, wringing Humphrey's hand; and then he went slowly and heavily back into his own room.

Humphrey gave a queer little satisfied grunt, when he was left alone, which accorded strangely with the perplexed look of pain his face had hitherto worn.

"It is an ill gait, but it may end better than we thought," he muttered, as he descended the hill; "that is, if it be not the death of her. Poor child! she little suspects the heart-ache she has caused. The squire would rather have cut off his right hand than this had happened; he'll be blaming himself and thinking more of her in consequence. If she had had the wisdom of the serpent instead of the harmlessness of the dove, she could not have done better for herself than going away and leaving him to miss her." And the old pain tugged at Humphrey's heart-strings as he thought how dearly and truly Guy would learn to prize his treasure.

"Be you going to Lunnon, Farmer Nethecote?" was Dison's astonished greeting, as Humphrey made his appearance on the high windy platform.

"Oh, eh, we country-folk must be having our sight-seeing sometimes," returned Humphrey, absently. "Yours must be a dull kind of place, Dison: how many passengers do you book an hour, I wonder? And what makes you think I am going to London, Dison, when my ticket is for Harrogate?"

"Folks like you and t' squire aren't over-fond of putting up at Harrogate," returned Dison, with a grin. "Why, when I see t' squire's black bag I say, 'Lunnon, for sure.' Why, you've a bag yourself, Farmer Nethecote, and it ain't samples nor market-day."

"You are a sharp one, Dison," returned Humphrey, trying to speak jocularly, but with an uneasy flush on his honest face. "These Harrogate trains are as unpunctual as ever, I see: our ladies complain sadly when they are out on a shopping-expedition and get home late for dinner."

Dison grunted unintelligibly by way of answer. Slowness of traffic was a sore subject with him.

"Miss Elliott will be back in plenty of time, I should think," he answered, crossly. "It is early birds as pick up worms, as I thought to myself when I served her with her

ticket. To think of one of the Ingleside ladies taking the first train! She was asking after my wife at the time, and I never heeded; she asked for a single instead of a double: she'll be finding out her mistake, I'll be bound, before she reaches Hampswaite."

"Oh, the best of us are absent sometimes," returned Humphrey, nervously, as he moved away a step from the garrulous station-master. Dison had been in the squire's service before his brother-in-law had entered it, and was well acquainted with all the doings at Ingleside.

As the train appeared in sight, he heaved a sigh of relief. "There's not a doubt but I am on her track," he muttered, as he stepped into the second-class compartment. "After all, the squire's right, and she has gone back to the old place."

Little did Dym guess, as she took her weary journey from Harrogate to York, and from York to London, that her faithful friend Humphrey was following in her footsteps.

Guy's unerring instinct had not been at fault; sick and bewildered, almost numb from intensity of pain, yet never faltering in her purpose, Dym watched the flying mile-stones diminish between her and London, and while Humphrey was trying to beguile the longest hour he had ever known on the ramparts at York, Dym was dragging herself slowly up the steps of the old house in Paradise Row.

"Richard, Richard, here is our young lady come back!" But Susan Maynard's joyous exclamation changed into one of alarm as Dym tottered into the dusky passage and almost fell into her arms. "Quick, husband, quick! she is going to faint! Oh, what ever has come to my darling dearie that they have sent her back to us like this?"

"I am not going to faint; I am only so tired." But Dym's explanation was choked by a sudden sob; she cast a bewildered look round the little room, and then at the faces of kind Richard Maynard and his wife. "Where am I? Where is Will? What has happened to me?" cried the poor child, stretching out her hands to them. A moment afterwards she had thrown her arms round Susan's neck, and was crying out to them hysterically to keep her—to hide her somewhere for the dear love of heaven; her heart was broken, and no one wanted her; she would die soon and go to Will.

Oh, if she could only die! That was the one rebellious

prayer that rose to her lips morning, noon, and night, during those first few weary days that followed her flight from Ingleside; and, indeed, the girl's sick despair filled her humble friends with dismay and pity.

She had had a great sorrow, and had left Ingleside for ever: that was all she told them; but before many hours were over they were in possession of the truth.

"We will watch over her as though she were our own—as though she were little Dick himself," broke out Richard, huskily, as Humphrey, in an agitated voice, prayed them to be gentle with her, and, as he wrung their hands at parting, Susan sobbed out, "Richard's not the man he was since our Dick has gone, but he'll keep his word; you may trust him, sir. Tell your squire we will guard her like our own daughter."

Dym, lying on her bed, or pacing the room restlessly, little thought of Humphrey's grave whispering under the stars. Once, as she approached the window and drew back the curtain, the sound of footsteps on the pavement below caused her to drop it hastily. The little group broke up somewhat hurriedly after that, and Dym came back and rested her head against the low window-sill. The starlight somewhat soothed her; it made her think of Will and the great cloud of witnesses.

"Oh, Will, are you sorry for me? Do you know how I suffer?" she would say, half aloud, over and over again.

Susan would have guessed the girl's secret even if Humphrey had not imparted it. Dym would start from her sleep with broken exclamations and snatches of words, the bursting forth of a long-pent-up agony. "He is doing this for his mother's and his child's sake, and because he knows you love him," Susan heard her say, one night, when the girl's restless moaning had called her from her bed. "Was it wrong to love you? is it wrong now? how can I help it? oh, my darling, my darling, when I must love you to my life's end!" And as Susan stooped over and soothed her, she broke into passionate weeping, and faltered out between her sobs "that she was very young still, and had no mother; only Will knew, her dear Will; and only he would believe her, that she never meant to harm them like this."

But even in her intolerable desolation, when the memory

of all she had lost came upon her, and the prospect of her loveless life filled her with intense loathing, even then she never blamed Guy Chichester.

He had stooped to her out of his nobleness; his very goodness had prepared for her this humiliation; out of pity he had chosen her to be his wife—a wife uncrowned, unadorned by her husband's love. Dym's cheeks would flame with sudden hot pain as the remembrance of the last few weeks flashed before her. Good heavens, how happy she had been! the very sound of his voice in her ear, the touch of his hand on her hair, had filled her with silent ecstasy; his caresses had been few, but she had never complained of their coldness; his silence had been more perfect to her than another man's words. Absorbed in her worship, she had feasted and been satisfied with a few crumbs of human kindness; but she could not stoop to his pity.

"I could have married you, Guy," she whispered; "I could marry you now; but I should scorn myself for doing it. If you had only wanted me a little, oh, ever so little, dear, I would never have left you; but to make me your wife out of pity——" And her head dropped forward on her breast as Beatrix's cruel words rose to her memory.

But there were times when her yearning would be too great for even her endurance, when she would feel as though she must go back just to look upon the walls of Ingleside and to satisfy herself that he and the child were well. If she could only see their faces for one moment, if she could hear his voice one more, and know that he was not angry with her, she could have borne her misery more bravely; but the utter silence that had fallen between them seemed to the unhappy girl almost like the silence of death.

"He knows where I am; he could seek me out, or send me one word—one word—to assure me of his forgiveness," she said, with the strange contradiction and argument of sorrow. "He is hurt or grieved, or perhaps my sudden flight has angered him; and yet it is not like him to be so hard when he knows—when he must know—how I love him." And the tears rolled down her pale cheeks and fell into her lap. Suffering—the sting and uncertainty of her trouble—was killing her; the dull numb pain at her heart never left her day or night; a feverish restlessness throbbed

in her pulse; she grew white and weak, almost to illness; but not for this would she spare herself.

"I must go out and work; if I stay in here and brood over my troubles I shall go mad," she said, one evening, sliding a hot hand into Susan's and looking up into her face with heavy lustreless eyes; but Susan would not help her young lady.

"Work! you're just fretting yourself into sickness, that is what you are, dearie. Here's Richard says you're pining yourself into a shadow; and no wonder, when you eat nothing and can't sleep for sorrowful thoughts. Work! there is not a day's work in you left," continued Susan, indignantly.

Dym smiled faintly at her vehemence.

"If I stay here and think, of course I shall be ill," she persisted, gently. "Dear Susan, don't you see how bad it must be for me? I cannot take another situation, not just yet. I have money enough to last me for a long time. But tell me of some one Will used to know; let me try and help others who are as miserable as myself."

Did she remember who beside Will had worked at St. Luke's? Once Richard Maynard mentioned in her hearing the name of a laborer living in the adjoining street who had met with an accident.

"They say it will cripple him; it is that Bill Saunders that used to be the plague of Mr. Elliott's life. He was one of Latimer's lambs, as they called him. Mr. Latimer had rare work with him."

"Where does he live, Richard?" asked Dym, eagerly. A faint spot of color came into her cheeks; her hands moved restlessly. As soon as it grew dark she tied on her bonnet and hurried round to the sick man's dwelling. "They say I be crippled for life," groaned poor Bill, looking into the sympathizing face that bent over him; "and there be Nancy and the children, and who is to put bread into their mouths?"

"I will take care of them; don't be afraid, Bill. If the doctor says your leg must come off, you must make up your mind to part with it like a man; God will take care of Nancy and the children, and I mean to be your friend." Dym spoke with a little flurry and haste; but Bill thought he had never heard so sweet a voice.

Susan gave a little cry of surprise when Dym glided softly back in the moonlight; the eager color had not yet faded out

of her cheeks; she looked up in Susan's face with a smile sweet almost to sadness; her voice had a quaver in it of mingled sorrow and joy.

"He is in great pain, but I do not think he will die; we must pray that he will not, for his poor wife's sake. Look here, Susan." And Dym opened her mantle, and there nestled closely at her breast lay a little child.

"It was such a little creature," cried the girl, softly, "and the mother was so worn out with the others, and it fell asleep in my arms, and I thought I would carry it home and take care of it for a little while;" and, her voice suddenly breaking, "They called it Florence."

Somehow, under the dark eaves of the houses in Paradise Row a sigh answered Dym's words: low as they were, they had been overheard. God bless her for the thought! was she thinking of him as well as the child?

Little did Dym guess who stood outside in the June moonlight—that only a few yards of narrow road divided her from Guy Chichester.

People marveled at the grave bearded figure that stood so long and silently before the humble house. The window was opened; through the screen of plants he could see the soft halo of lamplight, a moth wheeled round it; there was the low chair, the girlish figure in the gray gown he remembered so well; the gentle bent head still stooping over the child in her lap.

What a grave face it had grown! was it fancy or the lamplight? or did it grow suddenly pale, and the lips quiver? What was that sudden mist that blotted it out from his sight, as he turned hurriedly away and strode through the silent streets? Because he has heard a whisper that will haunt him through many a lonely day:

"For his mother's and his child's sake—oh, Flo, darling Flo, I dare not—he would not ask it now."

Few men would have envied the feelings of Guy Chichester as he paced through the midnight streets; some unaccountable sadness and longing had drawn him from his home; some chivalrous instinct impelled him to traverse those weary miles that he might see her with his own eyes, and judge for himself that others were tending her well.

But he never meant to speak to her; her refuge should be

sacred from him and his. He thought the time was not come yet that he should dare to plead his cause with her.

"I could not be your wife now: the very thought humbles me." Good heaven, to think how he had failed in his sacrifice! he had meant to shield her with his strong arm, to make her young life a very joy to her, and she had fled from him crushed and broken-hearted.

He had told his cousin that he was bound to her, and that no other woman should be his wife. He had sworn it with a blackness of brow that had been dreadful to her; but how was he to win for himself the girlish purity that refused to become an unloved wife?

Did he love her—could he ever love her—as he had loved Honor—the heart of his heart—his very soul—as he had once in his madness called her? Could any other woman, the best, the noblest, replace the bride of his youth—the mother of his child? He dared not lie to himself; he knew such a thing was impossible; even in his brief sad wooing he had bidden her remember that the best of his life was buried in Honor's grave. No, he did not love her—not as men should love when they seek to gather some young life into their own. For his mother's and child's sake he had wooed her, and because her presence had rendered his hearth less desolate. How was she to know that a growing tenderness was springing up in his heart for her, and that he was longing for her with a soreness that surprised himself?

How the sweetness of her presence had comforted him! Ah, he knew that now. How meekly and quietly she had borne her honors as the future mistress of Ingleside! Her unselfishness, her devotion to his child, had inspired him almost with reverence; and yet with him she had carried herself as humbly as a child.

"You have always been so grand, so noble, in my eyes," she had said to him, once, and he could feel the soft touch of her little hand as she had timidly stolen it into his in the twilight. At a word of praise from him her dark eyes would shine like stars, and her face would be covered with blushes. "You are my king, I must serve you always," she had whispered, once, as she performed some little womanly office, and he had smiled in his sad way and let it pass.

Ah, he knew well how she loved him: the very sense of

his power over her made him shrink in very delicacy from taking an undue advantage. "If I go to her and tell her that I want her, that my home is lonely and my heart heavier than ever without her, she will come to me—I know she will—but I shall not make her happy. If only some chance would bring us together, and I could tell her that her place is ready for her, and that I want my little friend to be always near me, I think she would come and cling to me as she clung that last time; and perhaps I might teach her to trust me once more." And again the mist swam before his eyes as he remembered how that evening he had ridden slowly between the limes, and had seen her standing, a little shimmering gray figure, motionless in the sunlight.

So Guy Chichester went back to Ingleside, and worked hard, and rode, and played with his child, and talked with his faithful friend Humphrey; but ever as he sat alone or paced the moonlight terraces, one picture rose before his eyes—the figure of a girl with a dark sweet face and shining head, bent over a sleeping child.

"It is such a little creature, Susan," he could hear her say, "and it fell asleep in my arms, and they called it Florence." "Come hither, Flo, my darling. Do you love papa or auntie best now? What! auntie still? Hush, don't cry, my child: auntie will come back to us soon."

The June days had worn heavily away, and then July and August, and the humble folk in Paradise Row began to whisper and shake their heads as Dym's slight figure came down the hot sunny streets. "She has a purely white kind of wasting look," one of them was saying to Susan Maynard: "that's how my Willie was took—fretted and pined himself into his grave. She has a look like Mr. Elliott when he was rarely bad."

"It is the mind wearing on the body, that's what it is, neighbor," returned Susan, lifting her apron to her eyes. She had been shedding tears recently; but she wiped them now hastily away, as her young lady came wearily down the street.

"Am I late, Susan? are you looking for me? Poor little Robert was so near his end that I waited till all was over; he died so happily, Susan."

"You look every bit as bad as him," returned Susan, in a vexed tone; "not a speck of color in your face. You'll not take it to heart, will you, my darling dearie—you'll be good

and brave even if there is more coming to trouble you?" she continued, in a caressing voice, as she drew Dym gently into the passage.

"It did not trouble me; dear little Robert was so glad to go; he said a prayer so prettily—Oh, what is that?" as a dark shadow fell against the narrow entry.

"It is only Mr. Nethecote: you will be good and brave, dearie?"

"Yes, it is only I," said Humphrey, coming forward and holding out his hand: his face had a grave sadness on it; his great hand trembled as Dym's little fingers clung to it. "I have come to fetch you, my dear; the squire wants you—we all want you. We fear he is dying."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE LAST OF THE COBWEBS.

It is impossible to describe Dym's feelings as Humphrey delivered himself of his sorrowful message.

"It seems I am always to be the messenger of evil tidings to you, my dear," he said, tremulously.

It was hard on him; why was he ever constrained to give her pain? his heart throbbed with great pitiful beats as he watched the girl's silent anguish. She had uttered a low glad cry of recognition at the sight of her friend; but now she stood white and stricken, clinging to the fond hand that had dealt her this second blow.

"Hush! it is God's will: if it comes we must try to bear it."

"Is it God's will? it is not true. He cannot mean that, surely," exclaimed the poor child. Her hand closed round Humphrey's almost convulsively; an awful pallor came over her face; a powerlessness that was not faintness seemed creeping over her; her heart felt like a stone in her bosom; she was stifled, suffocated.

"Oh, it is not true! I cannot bear it!" came in a hoarse

cry, almost a shriek, from her lips. Was this the end of her love and faithfulness? Guy, her Guy, for whom she would have laid down her life, dying!

"Hush, my dear, hush!" cries Humphrey, with a sob. Sick and dizzy, she had turned from him, and had sunk, nay, almost fallen, into Will's chair. Humphrey watched her as she lay with her head flung back on the horsehair cushion till his honest heart was almost broken; her face looked almost as gray and drawn as the dead man's had done. "Oh, my child, hush! they think so, but doctors are often wrong; we will not lose hope, you and I," he said, leaning over her with tears in his eyes and stroking the cold little face with his great hands. Dym's feeble fingers suddenly stopped him.

"There is hope, then? everything is not lost?" she said, half rising in her hysterical agitation. "Oh, Humphrey, you might have killed me," pushing her hair from her face and looking at him with wild pathetic eyes that stabbed him afresh.

"Nay, nay, Dym—it was my clumsiness: it seems no good beating about the bush when there is bad news to be told—and it is bad enough, God knows. When they brought him in, more than one of us thought it was all up with the squire."

"You have not told me, Humphrey—was it an accident, then?" cried Dym, faintly; the numbness was creeping on her again.

"Ay," he replied, slowly, drawing the cold hands into his own to warm them. Dym shivered and hid her face, as bit by bit he imparted the terrible news. A whole world of horror and doubt lay in Humphrey's succinct narrative. Guy had been trying a new mare that he lately purchased—a beautiful creature, but vixenish and wild-blooded, and almost as uncontrollable as an unbroken colt.

"I had warned him against her, my dear," Humphrey had explained, in his mild way, "but you know the squire, when he has got an idea in his head. The mare was his last new hobby, and nothing would do but he must break her in himself. No one knows how it happened; something—a shot from the plantation—startled the animal; but she reared, lost her balance, and, before the squire could get his foot out of the stirrup, she fell backward on him."

"Humphrey," cried the girl, starting up in a sudden agony, "you are not keeping anything from me? he is not dead?"

"Nay, nay; things are bad enough without making them worse; he has some of his ribs broken, for she rolled right over him, and they say one arm is injured; but it is the head, Dym! they fear congestion of the brain. It is three days ago, but he has only spoken once, and that was to ask for you."

"And when was that?"

"Last night; that is why I am here now."

"Why are we waiting, then? we are losing time. If we should be too late? Oh, Humphrey, take me to him," clasping her hands round his arm.

"Of course I will take you to him; what else have I come for?" returns Humphrey, in a slow, kind voice, that somehow soothes the girl's agitation.

She lay back passively after that, and let Susan make her little preparation.

"Good-by; Humphrey will take care of me," she said, smiling sadly into the faithful creature's tear-stained face, as she drew down her veil and sank into the corner of the carriage.

"You must try not to fret, Dym; while there is life there is hope," Humphrey said, once, trying to rouse her.

Dym's head dropped upon her breast, but she made no answer. Would that weary journey ever end, the girl wondered? She could hardly have borne it but for Humphrey's kindness. Dym was so utterly spent that she could only thank him with faint smiles. She swallowed the wine he brought her at York, but she could not eat; some choking oppression lay at her heart. Her ghastly looks alarmed Humphrey. Would the flying mile-stones ever lessen? Would they be too late, after all? And then came the sickening thrill of recognition—there was Birstwith at last!

"They have sent up the wagonette; he is not worse, Dym."

Humphrey talked fast and eagerly as he hurried Dym along the little platform. There was Dison, touching his hat officiously; there were Stewart and the bays waiting for them.

Dym drew down her veil more closely as they dashed through the village. Every one would know her, of course.

There was the mill, and the weir; the boys were splashing barelegged among the boulders as usual; there was the Nidd rippling with streaks of silver through the trees; there were the church and the vicarage; the lodge-gates had opened and closed after them, and they were whirling through the shrubberies. Gray-headed Miles was waiting at the hall-door, and then Humphrey came round and lifted her out.

"Go into the drawing-room; I must find Mrs. Chichester," he whispered; but Dym lingered. "Don't keep me from him, however he is. I will be good; you know I will, Humphrey," she implored; but Humphrey's only answer was a reassuring smile, and he was turning away, when Florence suddenly ran in from the dark hall and flung herself upon Dym.

"Oh, Flo! Flo! Flo! my darling Flo!" cries Dym, with a sudden sob, as the child nestles delightedly in her arms. "Have you wanted me, Flo?"

"Naughty auntie, to go away," returns Florence, with a shower of sweet kisses, that seem to cool the girl's hot brain.

"No, you are not to cry; grannie is crying now, and all because papa is better. Yes, papa is better, and grannie says so; and you are to come to her now at once."

"Courage, Dym," says Humphrey, with the same kind smile; but all the same he has almost to support her under this new dizziness. Better! What! is there mercy in heaven for them even now? She goes up the staircase panting and breathless, with the child still clinging to her.

"Oh, my dear! my dear! God has been good to us. He has slept! he is better."

Dym never knew what answer she made. She heard Humphrey say, "Thank God!" devoutly, as though he were in church. She heard Florence exclaim, "How white auntie looks! poor auntie!"

"Leave her to me, Humphrey: I know what it is," says Mrs. Chichester, gently.

Yes; he thinks he may leave them safely now, as he sees the two women clinging together. He knows the girl's tortured brain will relieve itself in tears on her friend's bosom.

"He is saved—they do not fear for his brain now. Oh, Dym, is it not Goodness itself watching over us? My boy is spared to his mother—spared to us both."

"Hush! I am content, though it be only to you. Can you not understand that?" interrupted the girl, flushing and paling, as the blind face bends tenderly over her. "Oh, I have been wicked; I have almost died of it," she whispered, covering her face with her hands; "and now this has happened to punish me for my selfishness. Dear, dearest, I can be happy now, though his life is only spared for your sake," kissing the wrinkled hand as she spoke.

"You are my own little daughter, whatever he makes you," was the fond reply. "Dym, you must never leave me again. I cannot do without you. I think he has wanted you badly too, though he has never said so until last night."

"No, no," almost panted the girl; "you must not talk so; it is not right; and he lying there brought back to his mother and child from the very gates of death."

Mrs. Chichester smiled as she put her hand fondly on the bowed head. Dym's tears still flowed, but her pale face was radiant. He would not die; he wanted her; he had asked for her; she should see him again. Dym's simple loyalty could go no further than this; more would have dazzled and overcome her, but now she was content.

She would see him; she would nurse him. He had forgiven her, and would be her friend again; here was matter for rejoicing. She acquiesced without regret when she heard he had taken his sleeping-draught, and that she must not see him that night. She lay down in her little bed spent and worn out by conflicting emotion, and even in the midst of her *Te Deum* fell into a heavy dreamless sleep.

It was not until the afternoon of the next day that Dym was admitted to the sick-room. She had been wandering about her old haunts, hand in hand with Florence, trying to beguile the feverishness of waiting, and was looking pale and worn, when Humphrey came in search of her.

"You may come now, Dym; he has been asking for you several times, but he looked feverish, and we thought it better to wait. You must be quiet, and soothe him if he speaks; it is early days, and we must be careful still, Dr. Grey says."

"Yes, I know," was Dym's hardly audible answer, as she prepared to obey Humphrey's summons. Kelpie was lying at the door of the sick-room; a sudden mist swam before her eyes, as she stooped to caress him.

It was a close sultry afternoon, and the windows had been flung open that the air might refresh the invalid. Mrs. Chichester sat beside the farthest one; her knitting had fallen into her lap, and on the bed lay the motionless figure, high up on the pillows, with one bandaged arm resting on the coverlet.

At Dym's hesitating footstep it stirred slightly, and a smile passed over the pale face.

"At last, my child; you have come at last," Dym heard, in the old well-known voice.

"Oh, Mr. Chichester!" Dym could say no more, as Guy Chichester stretched out his uninjured arm and drew her gently towards him, trembling from head to foot, and hardly able to refrain from tears.

"Sit down; no, you must not stand. Poor child, it has gone hardly with you, I see. Dym, are you so sorry for me?" his own eyes moist, as he saw her emotion.

"It might have been your death. Hush, you must not talk, indeed you must not, Mr. Chichester." Dym in her agitation is unconscious that her tears are falling now on the hand that still holds hers.

"Are those tears for me? Oh, my child, I do not deserve them," he whispered, lifting the little hand to his lips. "Dym, have you any idea how I have wanted my little friend?"

"She is here now," was the unsteady answer.

"Yes, she is here, thank God! Dear, you are right; I must not talk much, my head is not to be trusted. You will not leave me again, my child?"

"Not while you want me," returned Dym, unconscious of any meaning attaching to his words. His smile mystified her.

"That is well; one day I shall remind you of your promise," he replied, in a voice so faint that Dym forgot her agitation—everything—in the desire to relieve his evident suffering.

Before many hours were over, Dym found herself installed in the sick-room; the mother could only sit helplessly beside her son's bed, the brunt of the nursing fell on Dym and Humphrey. Humphrey was strong and helpful, but Dym's tender ministries were most grateful to Guy Chichester, lying sore and bruised and in secret anguish of pain; he suffered less when Dym dressed his injured arm; her cool skillful manipulations afforded him comparative ease; by the unerring instinct of love she guessed his wishes; the cooling drink was at his

lips, and the fragrant water laving his burning head, before he had shaken off the indolence of weakness sufficiently to frame them in words.

"How good you are to me! have you found your true vocation now?" he whispered, once, as she stooped over him to turn the heated pillow, and he looked at her a moment with something of his old drollery. Dym turned away without answering, but her color rose; it seemed to her half a lifetime ago since that talk in the little room in Paradise Row, when the tall bearded stranger had watched her from Will's chair with grave quizzical eyes, and had told her that nursing and not teaching was her vocation, and she had answered him with girlish vehemence.

"Come here, my child. Have I hurt you?" And there was a wistful look in the dark eyes as he stretched out his hand to her.

Dym shyly shook her head.

"No; only I am so glad to be able to do anything for you, and—and it seems so strange looking back at those old days, Mr. Chichester."

"Mr. Chichester! you must find some better name than that: it sounds cold from my little friend's lips. How your hand trembles! There, God bless you, my—my child!"

He bit his lip as though he had suddenly remembered something, and Dym drew back into the shadow of the curtain, strangely agitated and happy.

Yes, happy! though once she had been his betrothed wife, and now things were at an end between them, and he was only her friend.

Dym's simplicity and unselfishness stood her in good stead at this juncture of her life; she had accepted a difficult position with the grace and unconsciousness of a child. She had met her lover that first day with some natural agitation, but the sight of his suffering had banished all feeling of weakness into the background; he was ill and needed her, that was sufficient for the present, the future must take care of itself. When her work was finished—ah, well, she could but go away again; she must not think of herself now, and so she moved about his room with a face of sweet gravity that moved Guy strangely with a thousand vague feelings of remorse and pity.

"You are altered, Dym," he once said to her, passing his

hand softly over her hair; "you are worn and thin and look years older. and all this nursing will not bring the roses back."

"I can do without them," was the quiet answer; but she blushed crimson under that tender scrutiny; such speeches moved her from her calmness. Guy looked at her sadly for a moment, and then, muttering some impatient protests against his weakness, turned away with a sigh.

Those weeks were teaching Guy Chichester strange lessons: chained down by impatience of weakness, and brought face to face with acute suffering, what marvel if the man read the story of his life again under new lights, and, weighing himself in sterner balance, found himself wanting!

Life had come to him in all its reality; and he had made it a pitiable failure: he had centred his all on an earthly shrine, and Divine jealousy—righteous in its retribution, unerring in its wisdom—had riven his idol from him and left him alone, maddened with his loss.

How many talents had he had intrusted to him—strength, and wealth, and intellect; philanthropy wide enough to embrace a world—influence that none could resist! and how miserably he had squandered them all! He had had his portion of goods, and no spendthrift could have wasted them more unprofitably. Great souls have great repentances; verily, there is hope, and to spare, when such men as Guy Chichester turn their faces to the wall to commune with their God and be still.

Sometimes in the dead of night, when the shadows of the night-light glimmered on the ceiling, and Humphrey dozed beside, half-forgotten snatches of verses that Honor used to sing came to his mind; and one especially haunted him that she had sung that Sunday night at Mentone before her baby was born:

"While we do our duty,
Struggling through the tide,
Whisper thou of beauty
On the other side."

"Oh, Honor, be my guardian angel still," he whispered; and out of the darkness her sweet, serene face seemed to smile on him in answer.

"He will come back, my girl; I know him well: these noble souls are not kept to wander in outer darkness. Ah!

what if in the mysterious communion of saints wives in paradise do verily and indeed watch over their husbands upon earth!"

It was weeks before Guy Chichester shook off the effects of his accident; weeks before he could be moved from his bed to the couch; weeks before, a mere shadow of himself, he crept, supported by Humphrey's strong arm, to bask for an hour on the sunny terrace.

Dym looked sadly after him, as she thought of the strong, vigorous Guy Chichester of old, and contrasted him with the tall shrunken figure before her, bowed with weakness and prematurely gray-haired.

It would be long before he would look himself, she thought. The injured arm had healed, but the shock to the nervous system had been great. When the cold weather set in, he must go to the South, Dr. Grey told them; for months to come he would require care and nursing—months before he would be comparatively strong again.

Dym listened and sighed; her work was not over yet, she thought; and then she wondered what grave consultation had detained Dr. Grey so long in the library that morning. Mr. Chichester had been more than usually thoughtful for some days, and Dym was sure something was on his mind; he had scarcely looked at her or spoken to her lately; and yet, when he had addressed her, his manner had been as kind as usual.

It was October now, and the evenings were growing chilly; a small wood fire of Guy's favorite pine-knots had been lighted in the library, and Guy, who was weary with his unusual exertion, had been lying quietly all the afternoon—half dozing, half enjoying the pleasant warmth—when he suddenly roused into a sitting posture and asked for Dym.

"She is here," in a quiet voice behind him. "I thought you were asleep, and was afraid to disturb you even for this," showing the glass in her hand.

"Always my attentive nurse," looking at her gratefully and drinking the restorative. "You are pale and tired, Dym; I shall have to be waiting on you next."

She smiled at that—a quaint little smile—but full of sweetness.

"I shall have time to rest when you have dismissed your nurse, Mr. Chichester."

"Mr. Chichester—always Mr. Chichester!—so you are waiting for your dismissal, eh?"

His tone was so abrupt, almost displeased, that Dym looked in his face quite startled; what she saw there made her flush scarlet.

"Come and sit down. You are right; I am growing tired of my nurse; I want my little companion instead. Nay," as she faltered out some excuse about leaving him, "I have long been thinking we ought to have some talk together, you and I."

"By and by, another time—not to-night," stammered Dym. She was trembling from head to foot. Why did he want to speak to her? he was well now, and she must tell him that she must go away again.

"Poor child! she has grown to be afraid of me," he said, gently smoothing her hair and drawing her closer to him. "Dym, have you ceased to trust your friend?"

Her only answer was to hide her face in her hands, and pray him to spare her. Bursting into tears, she implored him not to speak to her—to let her go—and not be good to her, for she could not bear it.

"Why should I let you go, when I want you?" he answered, gently, and there was something in his firm pressure of her hands that soothed even her exceeding agitation. "Dym, I never mean to let you go. What do you mean? have you forgotten your promise?"

"What promise?"

"To stay with me while I wanted you. Dym, I want you always. Did you not understand my meaning? I was too weak to explain."

"No, no," she said, starting from him. "Mr. Chichester, you must not talk so; it is not right, when you know——" She stopped, and her face was dyed with crimson.

"What do I know, dear? that you are my affianced wife?"

"No, no," she repeated, in a heart-broken tone. "We have altered that—my letter has altered that. No, do not be kind to me," as he only pressed her hand more tenderly. "I have given you back your troth; you are free, quite free; I have made you so. I am nothing to you—nothing but the poor little friend who has loved and nursed you."

He smiled at that, a sweet benign smile that seemed to bless her, and strove to draw her more into his sheltering arm.

"I think you are more than my little friend."

"No, Guy, I am not," using his name for the first time in her agitation.

"Yes, you are; you are my darling, my wife that is to be: I have never been free, I never wish to be free. Have you misunderstood me all this time, my child? It has come to this, that I cannot do without you, Dym, that I want you always."

Did she dream the words, or did he speak them? was that earnest voice, so sad and yet so sweet, speaking to her?

"I have my faults, no man more; but I never willfully deceived you. I have buried the best part of my life in Honor's grave; nay, do not shrink from me, dear, I have told you this before; if you can be content with such love as I can give you, for God's sake come to me, Dym, and make my desolate life less desolate. I love you very dearly for your own sweet sake."

"Really and truly, Guy?"

"Really and truly, sweetheart."

"Oh, I am happy!" Dym scarcely breathed the words, but Guy heard them, and, with a strength of which he could scarcely believe himself capable, he lifted the little creature in his arms, and felt her nestle to his bosom, keeping her there till she had sobbed out her artless confession of love and sorrow.

"You must teach me to be more worthy of it, Dym, darling," he said, gravely, when their excitement had a little subsided, and Dym sat beside him with her dark eyes brilliant with shy happiness. "I have been a sad failure. What am I, that two such pure hearts should have made me their happiness?" And a look of terrible exhaustion passed over his face as he recalled his wasted life.

"You must not talk any more, Guy," she whispered, laying her little hand timidly on his forehead. Guy paid it tribute gratefully as it passed his lips. "You must let me be your nurse a little longer without wearying of her."

"You shall be what you like," he replied, unclosing his eyes; "but I know what I shall soon want to make you."

Dym's head drooped against his arm, but she made no answer.

And so the last cobwebs were swept away, and the great

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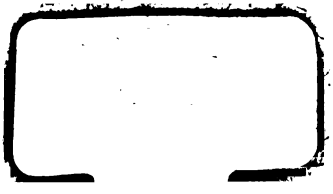

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